

## **Hillary Clinton and Condoleezza Rice Discuss America's Role in the World EP 216 Final Transcript**

Jon: Hey, welcome to a special edition of the Problem Podcast. Uh, today's episode's going to have Secretary Hillary Clinton, Secretary Condoleezza Rice, and we're gonna be talking about the state of democracy, not just here at home, but really in the world. And what's, uh, America's role in promoting or. Promoting such things, uh, should be a really interesting conversation. I hope you enjoy it.

[INTRO MUSIC]

Jon: Thank you, both of you, Secretary Clinton, Secretary Rice. I wanted to talk today about the future of, uh, American democracy, of democracy in the world, and more of a macro view. I'm old enough to remember the end of history. You, you've, the Berlin Wall fell, liberal democracy had won, uh, American power was going to be expanded throughout the world and extended. There were no more questions about this anymore. And that lasted, I guess around a week.

Condi: Yeah. If that.

Jon: What is the state in your minds of the idea of liberal democracy versus authoritarianism, illiberal democracy, what's the state of play as we stand now, Secretary Clinton?

Hillary: Well, I think the reason we're having this conversation, Jon, is because we're worried about the state of democracy and we're worried about, uh, not only democracy around the world, but even in our own country. Uh, so there are considerable stresses on the system that was built up over so many years, and that, of course, in my opinion, um, served our country and the world very well. There is a concerted effort by either illiberal, authoritarian, tyrannical regimes, uh, in the world today, uh, to try to push back. Uh not just democracy as a political or governing system, but freedom, human rights, the value of each individual, um, the dignity that each individual should be accorded. And we see that obviously with Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Iran's efforts to suppress the legitimate concerns and desires of their young people. What went on, uh, in Afghanistan. The consolidation of power in China. So I think it's a very real concern that, uh, I'm glad you're addressing.

Jon: Tenuous.

Condi: Well, I do think that, uh, the state of democracy is tenuous. I would maybe say it always is because I think democracy is actually hard.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Condi: It's not easy. It's, it's hard to say to people, you are going to trust your, your interest, your concerns, uh, your desires to these abstractions called institutions.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Condi: You're not gonna fight it out in the streets. You're not gonna go to clan and family. And, uh, we, we sometimes just don't focus on how remarkable it is that democracies work, particularly in places that are a bit, uh, cacophonous—

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Condi: —like the United States. I would also, uh, agree with Hillary about the pushback among authoritarians and, uh, tyrannical regimes because a number of them saw it coming for them. They saw that the aspirations of their people were growing —

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Condi: — and now they have to do something to maintain control. I would say, when I hear, and I do hear echoes of this sometimes, I'll call it authoritarian envy. “Oh, you know, they build great airports. Oh, they're so organized.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Condi: Oh, you know, isn't it amazing how messy democracy is, they get things done.” I wanna say to people, first of all, you wouldn't like to live in a place that gets things done in that way. But secondly, they also make huge mistakes. So think about China.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Condi: Think about the one child policy, which was brutally and efficiently carried out—

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Condi: —uh, several decades ago. And now 34 million Chinese men don't have mates. And so when authoritarians make a mistake, they make a really big mistake because there's nobody, there's no self-correcting mechanism.

Jon: No pendulums.

Condi: No pendulum to, to say, “You can't do that.” And so these, uh, authoritarian leaders in Vladimir Putin essentially one man—

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Condi: —decides to take his country to war against, uh, a neighbor because he thinks it's gonna be easy and now everything's in turmoil. So, uh, yes, there are terrible problems with democracy, but uh, it is the best system that anybody has ever found.

Jon: Right. Which brings us to, I think, I think the question then becomes for America, what's our role in stabilizing that system in helping to accentuate democratic regimes, push back against authoritarian regimes and have we, you know, let's sort of take it from World War II. You know, we kind of had this idea. America at that time had 80 bases around the world. Uh, we get involved with fighting fascism. We defeat authoritarianism. We go in with a Marshall plan. We rebuild these former enemies into really thriving democracies and allies. Cut to today, we have 800 military bases around the world. We, uh, still have those democratic allies, but we also still have military presence in all those places. Has America made the world more stable through those policies or have we in some ways created some of the instability that has allowed these more illiberal and authoritarian regimes, more space to operate? You know, what's, what's your feeling in that, on a macro level?

Condi: Yeah.

Jon: And where do we go in the future?

Condi: Well, whenever you're a great power—

Jon: Right.

Condi: —or a superpower,

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Condi: You don't mind your own business. Great powers want to shape, the—

Jon: We're gonna hear something from ‘Spiderman’ aren't we? [CONDI LAUGHS] Great power comes with great responsibility.

Condi: Really, it's — but you really do wanna shape the environment. And so after World War II, we shaped an environment where we thought democracy could thrive in places that never had before. Like Germany and Japan.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Condi: Um, I think for the most part we continued on that path, but to be fair, uh, we made other choices in certain parts of the world.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Condi: So in the Middle East, it was about stability —

Jon: Right.

Condi: — not about democracy. In Latin America, we associated with all kinds of juntas, uh, because they were anti-communists. And so our, we were mixed —

Jon: We've supported authoritarian regimes in some places, right.

Condi: — we did support, during the Cold War. But I think with the end of the Soviet Union, there was really, uh, a desire to support regimes that were good to their people, uh, where people were, wanted to rise up against those regimes. Of course, we had to continue strategic relationships with some authoritarian regimes. But, um, I think on balance we've tried to do the right thing.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Condi: We haven't always been successful and, uh, the United States can't quote, impose democracy that doesn't work. Uh, by the way, you impose tyranny, uh, not democracy, but we haven't always succeeded.

Jon: Right.

Condi: In supporting those who want the very rights and responsibilities that we, uh, the rights that we have. Although I think we have tried, uh, we just haven't always been successful.

Jon: What's the best way to support that?

Hillary: Well, I think that we have a lot of, uh, ways of supporting it and we've demonstrated certainly since World War II and even since the Cold War, some of those ways, um, you know, in diplomatic, uh, speak, uh, we talk about hard power, soft power —

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Hillary: — But we really have tried to use diplomacy, defense, and development as ways of promoting, uh, the legitimate aspirations of people creating more economic opportunity, helping to stand up, uh, democratic institutions. I mean, we couldn't even tell you how many, um, government agencies we've helped to support through American taxpayer dollars.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Hillary: How many efforts to, uh, write constitutions implement the rule of law. So there has been a lot of activity, uh, in those kind of three buckets of diplomacy, uh, development and defense of course. And in many areas we have been successful. But one of the problems that we have.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Hillary: — since the end of the Cold War is that the Cold War gave us an organizing principle. Whether you were a Democrat or Republican, you had a sense of what we were organizing against, what our arguments were.

Jon: And was that communism, is that what?

Hillary: Yeah. It wasn't just communism, the system, it was the Soviet Union and its brutal imposition of communism.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Hillary: And it's continuing efforts to undermine the West, in particular the United States through all kinds of, uh, means active measures —

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Hillary: — as well as, uh, military actions. And it's crushing, uh, with Hungary, for example.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Hillary: The, uh, desires of their satellite states to break free from them. So we knew kind of what the game was in a geo-strategic, political, um, fashion. So at the end of, you know, the so-called Cold War, you know, that did kind of throw our toolbox up in the air. We had to figure out, okay —

Jon: Right.

Hillary: — what do we do now and how do we best relate to people coming out of the Soviet Union? Um, and you know, I think both Democrats and Republicans certainly, you know, the president's of both parties tried to figure out how best to support, uh, those, and I was a strong supporter of the expansion of NATO. [HILLARY LAUGHS] I remain a strong supporter and believe that, you know, what Putin has just done proves why those of us on that side were right. But with the absence of that, critical, uh, conflict, competition—

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Hillary: — uh, going on. I think there became, we got sloppy. I mean, we got kind of like, oh, okay, well do we really need to keep doing this? Or why is that important? I mean, to try to keep funding —

Jon: When you say sloppy, you mean, uh, in terms of our policy and incoherence?

Hillary: Yeah in terms of our policy and our coherence.

Jon: Right. Right. Right.

Hillary: Do we, do we keep putting our taxpayer dollars to try to build up a court system in some far away country. What is in it for us?

Jon: Nation building?

Hillary: Well, not, no, not nation building, institution building —

Jon: Institution, okay.

Hillary: — and there's a big difference.

Condi: A big difference.

Hillary: A big difference. And so I think that we understandably have been less able to bring coherence to the continuing promotion of democracy, which in my view is part of our national security agenda, it protects the United States, um, going forward. And that's part of where we are today, is like, and you know, look, I mean, I think we had a huge setback with the prior presidents for years because of the incoherence and the decisions and all that. And I do give President Biden and his team a lot of credit for kind of bringing NATO back together, trying to assuage some of the doubts that had grown up about how reliable we were and whether we could be counted on. And the support for Ukraine, thus far, has been, you know, very united. I hope it stays that way.

Condi: Yeah, I would agree on the support for Ukraine. I think it's reminded us all, uh, why we're lucky to live in a democracy when you see what the Ukrainian people are willing to do to defend their independence, their democracy, their rights. It's inspiring and maybe reminds us of America's, uh, role. I would say that there's one, uh, phrase that I don't like that people use. They talk about the democracy recession or the democracy deficit, and actually, uh, that's only true if you just expected a straight line in terms of the development of democracy.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Condi: Um, I used to teach a course at Stanford in the 1980s called "The Role of the Military and Politics." I could always teach about a couple of Latin American juntas right.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Condi: They're not there anymore. Brazil just had a democratic election.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Condi: And, uh, elected a man of the left, uh, Lula. If you look at Africa, there are fewer presidents for life today in Africa than there once were, not to mention Eastern Europe, which, uh, are with the exception of Hungary, functioning democracies. So if we take a longer look Democracy has, we have improved the democratic condition across the world, but it's been uneven. Turkey has-has gone backwards. Hungary has gone backwards.

Jon: Some of our NATO allies.

Condi: Some of our NATO allies, but there —

Jon: Italy.

Condi: — but there's no doubt, well, it's a democratic election. I would be very careful about conflating anti-democratic and populist, right?

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Condi: Populists are not necessarily anti-democratic, but they are anti-institutional. Right. They don't believe that they should have to go through institutions, they should have to respect institutions.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Condi: They will say to people who feel dispossessed, I have the answer to your problems. Those institutions are either racist, imbued with slavery, so don't trust them.

Jon: Right.

Condi: Or those institutions are, are, uh, elitist and, uh, don't represent you. Of course social media has made it possible for them to talk around and, uh, around those institutions in ways that I think the populist of the past, like the Perons of Argentina would've been delighted to have. But I think we have to be careful not to say every populace is anti-democratic.

Hillary: They also are though —

Condi: They are anti-institutional.

Hillary: We have to be clear-eyed about them because they can slip into —

Jon: Illiberal democracies are still democracies, but they are illiberal.

Condi: Yes, no, I would agree with that. But there's a difference. And we have to be careful because if we start to say that everybody who followed a populist is anti-democratic, we're gonna leave a lot of people on the cutting room floor. Who just were dispossessed —

Jon: Understood.

Condi: — uh, who, you know, the unemployed coal miner in West Virginia, who really thinks these institutions don't, uh, then, and we've gotta have an answer for that.



Jon: That's right and we have to strengthen the institutions. Putin has made a very big distinction, and I think this is something that seems to be, uh, the way these movements are, are going where he's saying, "I'm not against the west, I'm against the liberal west."

Condi: Right.

Jon: I think there are populist illiberal movements within the West that more align with us. They're anti-gay, they're more Christian nationalists. That is a political movement that these are still democracies. You might take a vote in Russia tomorrow and Putin would win it even with everything that's been going on, and yet he's moving towards that authoritarian stance.

Hillary: Let's be really clear. There's nothing democratic about Putin.

Jon: Understood, but he would be popular, let's put it that way.

Condi: Well, maybe not. After he's mobilized all those young men. [CROSSTALK BEGINS]

Jon: Right. That makes —

Hillary: Yeah maybe not [CROSSTALK ENDS] pulled, you know, you people out of their beds and sent the front lines with no training, no equipment, nothing. But, I just wanna be clear where I stand on this. I think populism as we think about it, which is a, uh, sort of popular uprising, a popular set of grievances about the way your society, your economy, your political system operates. That's been with us forever. And there are movements that, um, then mature into being full partners, uh, within a democracy. Uh, and that point of view is important.

Jon: Right.

Hillary: So during the New Deal, there were a lot of people who hated Franklin Roosevelt because he wanted to reign in institutions like banks and others. So I think that, that is totally legitimate and there is a, uh, critique of modern democracies, which I think has merit that somehow those who are leading in all kinds of, uh, positions in government, advising government, you know, lose track or lose touch with what is happening in various aspects of society so that people do feel disenfranchised —

Jon: Right.

Hillary: — and disempowered.

Jon: — and feel the effects of, like, globalization.

Hillary: Right.

Condi: Absolutely. Or automation.

Jon: This is a pendulum swing — or automation. And it's a pendulum swing against them.

Hillary: And even some of the cultural issues, like —

Jon: Right.

Condi: Yeah.

Hillary: ‘Wait a minute, what do you mean gay people are gonna be able to get married?’

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Hillary: Or “What do you mean, that, you know, women deserve, you know, full opportunities? I mean, wait a minute. That's not how I think, that's not how I was raised.”

Jon: Right.

Hillary: So there are cultural, there are economic, uh, as I say, legitimate, uh, questions about how societies operate and in a democracy, we should make much more of an effort to ensure that a full range of people's voices are heard. But at the end of the day, there are such things as fundamental rights. There are such things as protecting minority rights, freedom of the press and assembly. And part of what's always set us apart, uh, historically has been our constant effort, often falling short, but never ceasing, to make sure that we do, you know, try to protect those minority rights.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Hillary: And we do pass legislation to give people full enfranchisement that we open doors for opportunity and all the rest.

Jon: So lemme ask you —

Condi: But I could, if I could just say.

Jon: Please.

Condi: I think that's right, but I wouldn't want to leave it as, uh, those people who are upset about culture or mostly about gay people or about, uh, minorities. I actually don't think that that is true. But there are people who say, uh, there are, are those people, there are also people who say, "You don't respect the fact that I'm religious."

Jon: Mm-hmm

Condi: "You just don't respect that. Uh, you on the West coast and the East coast elites don't understand uh, I believe in a God. I go to church." And I think it's not just about some of these issues, it's also about certain parts of a quote "cultural attack." "Don't, don't tell my children —

Jon: What's the —

Condi: — don't tell my children that."

Jon: What's the identity of this country is what it comes down to.

Condi: Well I wouldn't even go there.

Jon: Really? Ok.

Condi: I wouldn't.

Hillary: But this is what's so tricky about it now.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Hillary: Is that I don't at all disagree with Condi's point that you know, people, you know, "I live in a rural area, you look down on me," as well as religion, lots of other things.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Hillary: And of course we should be, you know, much more inclusive, much more aware of those kinds of deeply held feelings and even beliefs and values. But where the rubber hits the road too

often is someone who says, “You don't respect my religious views and I want you to do what I believe.” I mean that, that is —

Jon: “I wanna impose that upon you.”

Hillary: — “I want to impose that upon you.”

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Hillary: And that's where it starts getting tricky because part of what we did, you know, with the First Amendment and Separation of Church and State is say “You know what? I do need to do a better job respecting your religious beliefs or your lack of religious beliefs.” And, you know, as someone who considers myself to be a person of faith and religious, I-I'm all for that. But I don't want you imposing your religious beliefs on me.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Condi: Or vice versa.

Hillary: Or vice versa.

Condi: And, and I think that's where we sometimes lose this conversation.

Jon: Okay.

Condi: Because when we, when we start to talk about illiberal, uh, views um, it sounds kind of like a one-way conversation sometimes because —

Jon: In the idea that liberal views are the direction we should be —

Condi: We should, exactly.

Jon: The arc of the moral universe should be moving in that direction.

Condi: Should be in that direction

Jon: As opposed to illiberal.

Condi: Look, I am somebody who lives on the west coast, right? I am a pro-choice person. I am —

Jon: Are you an elite?

Condi: — I, but — [HILLARY LAUGHS] I'm in the elite. I would — I really remember the times that people have said I was born in Alabama. I've heard some of my colleagues say, “You know, I should go to Alabama and see what those people think.” Right? Now when you have to go and do an anthropological dig on your fellow citizens, we've actually got a problem in this country of a split in, a kind of cultural split. And I think we have to recognize it. We can't allow one to, uh, to oppose or to, to oppress the other, but we have to recognize that it's a two way split, not a one-way split.

Jon: Right. But I think oftentimes though we fetishize that idea that the coasts are somehow out of touch. I could say, you know, how many times do you see somebody say “You don't know what real America wants.”

Hillary: Mm-hmm.

Condi & Hillary: It goes both ways.

Hillary: I think that's —

Jon: That's the suggestion, is that that's at the bottom. Right.

Hillary: I think that's Condi's point, but I do, I mean, part of, you know, as she said, she's pro-choice. Obviously I'm pro-choice and I always valued that position because I did respect other people's religious beliefs and therefore, in a pluralistic, multi-faith democracy like ours you're pro-choice or you're anti-choice beliefs could coexist.

Jon: Right

Hillary: Now we're being told “No, you know, that that's not the way it's gonna be” and if, you know, if certain people have their way, there'll be a national ban and all the rest of that. And I was very struck the other day reading about a lawsuit that was filed by, uh, I think a group of rabbis and Jewish lay people —

Jon: that their religion says you should be pro-choice.

Hillary: Exactly.

Jon: That's correct.

Hillary: That, you know, “You can't tell me what to do and, and I should be able to live anywhere in this country and have the same rights no matter what state border I might cross.”

Condi: We will be fine as long as that conversation can be had. Right? As long as people who have these different views —

Jon: Right

Condi: — can express them, can act on them, can go and say, “We think the legislation” — we will be fine.’ Because that's the use of the institutions.

Jon: Right.

Condi: I do think that I — look, I live in a university and one of the things that we have to be very careful about is not shutting out views that are not orthodox, popular, the views of the moment, uh, shouting down people who don't agree with your views.

Jon: Sure.

Condi: Uh, living in an echo chamber where you only read the, uh, blogs of people who think like you—

Jon: Right.

Condi: — because as long as we can have that conversation —

Jon: But the prevailing—

Condi: — that's good.

Jon: The prevailing wisdom is that the Left is censorious, that the Left because of political correctness is woke and wants to stop people from talking. But the truth is, boy, if you go to Liberty University, it's not like they're inviting firebrands of the Left to come in.

Condi: Well, I'm not responsible for Liberty University, but I'm responsible for Stanford University.

Jon: But you know what I mean?

Condi: Right.

Jon: But it's that sort of thing. But this is where we sort of bring it all together because I think this is a great place to kind of look at that macro view, the tensions within America, between liberal voices, uh, conservative voices, uh, the populous movements that are coming out are reactions to their pendulum swings of what people perceive as persecutions.

Condi: Yeah.

Jon: That we see those fault lines in America. Now, if we look at it in the world, have the actions of America led to a more unstable and globalized situation that has inflamed populism in this country, inflamed it in Europe? And I'll explain what I mean. You talked earlier about the buckets, defense development and, uh, —

Hillary and Condi: and diplomacy.

Jon: — and diplomacy. Our priorities as a country since World War II have really, A all the conversations that you're talking about. But there's also this other sort of, as Eisenhower warned, military industrial complex that kind of has a mind on its own. And I'll give you an example. State Department budget is what? \$50 billion?

[HILLARY AND CONDI LAUGH]

HILLARY AND CONDI: A little bit more.

Jon: Little bit more but around there. USAID —

Hillary: Not big enough.

[HILLARY AND CONDI LAUGH]

Jon: Not big enough. Lockheed Martin got 70 some billion just by itself. And if you think about a budget as a set of priorities, if we're giving one defense contractor — we sell arms to over a hundred countries. We sell arms to countries we sanction. We have — there are conflicts in the

world where both sides are using US armaments, you know, Turkey and the Syrian Kurds. Is our inability to control that aspect of our society, sowing the seeds for the instability that we see around the world that's leading to this more populist illiberal pendulum swing, and how do we reign that in?

Hillary: I understand the question and I do think it's worth, um, exploring and I'll get to that in a minute, but —

Jon: Sure.

Hillary: I think it is, um, historically inaccurate to say that our defense budget or our arm sale, uh, has promoted the, uh, authoritarian impulses in Victor Orbán, who was a NATO ally.

Jon: Right.

Hillary: To Vladimir Putin. To Xi Jinping. I don't think, I don't see the correlation there. I think that it's —

Jon: Well, let me draw then maybe a little bit more specifically — and this is all, and again, this is not to relitigate honestly. Our — what happened in Libya. We take out an authoritarian leader through military action, but we don't have the civic institutions that you talk about to back that up and it creates instability or what happened in Iraq and Afghanistan. There's a chaos that is born of that, right? Suddenly you have 35 million displaced individuals who migrate towards Europe. Europe feels the heat of what they consider this “other” that's coming to their borders. It creates the impetus for more populist, more illiberal, more authoritarian impulses to then gain traction democratically. Those are direct results of American military intervention.

Hillary: Well let me just finish and then —

[INDISTINCT CHATTER]

Hillary: I'll let Condi talk about that. Look, I think it's very hard to lump even the examples you just put together into sort of one bucket and say that then caused dislocation. That dislocation meant refugees to the shores of Europe and that, you know — because remember Angela Merkel took a million Syrian refugees.

Jon: Mm-hmm.



Hillary: The United States had nothing to do with Bashar al-Assad joining forces with Russia and Iran to suppress legitimate descent. She took a million refugees.

Jon: Right.

Hillary: And Germany did not turn into Hungary. Um, so it every —

Jon: But Germany feels that pressure and you see those right wing parties start to —

Hillary: No, not really, no, it's, minor league compared to what could have happened.

Jon: Certainly compared to Hungary. Yeah, compared to that.

Condi: Because of strong institutions in Germany.

Hillary: Orbán didn't take any refugees — I mean, he built the walls, kept them out. He didn't take any refugees. He used the, you know, the issue —

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Hillary: — not to solve a problem, but to consolidate power for himself.

Jon: Right.

Hillary: And, and so I think that there are lessons always to be learned from any of these situations and woe on us if we don't learn the lessons.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Hillary: And, you know, just very briefly on Libya, cuz that was on my watch.

Jon: Um, but this is not, again —

Hillary: No, no, but I wanna make a larger point —

Jon: Yeah.

Hillary: — because, you know, Gaddafi was a bad actor. Everybody knew he was a bad actor.

Jon: Sure.

Hillary: And he threatened to kill his people like cockroaches. The United States was actually the supporter of European countries through NATO and the Arab League, which for the very first time came and said, "We want to be part of trying to protect the people of Libya." Now, so I feel that that particular intervention, we had certain capabilities militarily that nobody else had, which we used to assist them. But you know, the Emiratis were flying and the Jordanians were flying, etc. The problem — and this is where I think you, you make a really good point. The problem is, okay, Gaddafi's gone.

Jon: Mm-hmm

Hillary: Um, his horrible prisons are emptied. What comes next?

Jon: Right. That's the problem.

Hillary: What comes next?

Jon: That's the point.

Condi: And that's, that's always a problem because there's always a vacuum. Uh, because look, dictators don't allow institutions to, uh, to flourish. So when you take the dictator out, there are no institutions.

Jon: That's right.

Condi: So that's — but the question becomes, do you then say, let Gaddafi go ahead and kill his people, cuz it's gonna be hard afterwards or in our case we thought Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. You gonna let that continue? Or are you going to take him out and then do the best that you can in helping people to recover? You have to recognize that it's gonna be hard once you take the dictator out. But Jon, it's a little bit of a false choice to say, "Well then just leave the dictator in place because it won't be chaotic." It may not be chaotic.

Jon: But is that — I guess what I am saying is —

Condi: It may not be chaotic —

Jon: — if we take that role on —

Condi: — but it might be brutal against the people.

Jon: If we take that role on, can we sustain as a country? You know, when you think about the Soviet Union's collapse, they overextended and they got in an arms race with us and they had all these satellites. Are we overextending America's power, especially militarily, when you talk about an \$800 billion defense budget?

Hillary: Let's assume that instead of, instead of being in a podcast studio, we were in the Situation Room.

Jon: Yes.

Condi: Right.

Hillary: Or, you know, in the tank, in the Defense Department, wherever we were.

Jon: Alright.

Hillary: Okay. And we're saying, okay, what do you see on the horizon? Well—

Jon: Right.

Hillary: North Korea is shooting these —

Hillary & Condi: missiles

Hillary: — over our ally, Japan.

Jon: Right.

Hillary: Um, China is trying to build up its, uh, Blue Water Navy so that it can compete with us anywhere in the world.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Hillary: You've got, you know, the Russia, China relationship. It's tricky, but we have to watch it really carefully cause we don't know where that might lead. We've got Iran still a very bad actor and probably in addition to killing their people, will cause some external problems in order to

take people's minds off it. We have a lot of issues so do we just sit back and hope for the best, or do we try to be positioned —

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Hillary: — in enough places with enough support that we can be a good ally to those who are counting on us.

Condi: And, and you have to watch the potential rise of terrorism again, so you have a lot on your plate, but I would just say, should the United States be selective in the use of its military power?

Jon: Right.

Hillary: Absolutely.

Jon: Right.

Condi: Uh, after Afghanistan and Iraq, which we did for security reasons, not cuz we wanted to spread democracy at gunpoint, but for security reasons.

Jon: Although ultimately we were told that spreading democracy would make the world safer because —

Condi: Well, actually —

Jon: — freer countries would —

Condi: Well, I think —

Jon: — be more peaceful.

Condi: — if you, if you actually look at the record, uh, democrat, uh, democratic countries actually don't invade their neighbors. Democratic countries don't harbor terrorists. Uh, democratic countries don't use weapons of mass destruction. So I think —

Jon: They don't harbor 'em, but they have a —

Condi: Well

Jon: — they can't — it'd be hard to — I mean that —

Condi: But — But Jon

Jon: — was planned in Germany.

Hillary: But they're not aided or supported by government they're trying to ravage...yeah...  
[INAUDIBLE]

Jon: I understand what you're saying. I understand what you're saying.

Condi: And the — always —

Jon: That is a distinction.

Condi: — but always try to look at the converse, alright?

Jon: Yes.

Condi: Uh, just because they have in some of these weak states, terrorists among them, would you rather have somebody who's actually harboring them and assisting them?

Jon: Understood. Understood.

Condi: So, uh, so that's the first point. The second point is that, yes, we need to be more selective.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Condi: But I would be the strongest voice as I know Hillary is when Vladimir Putin decides to extinguish his neighbor. Should the United States really just step back from that and say, "Well, you know, that's kind of your business. After all, Ukraine's been a part of the Russian Empire," and so forth, and there are some people in the United States who would say, "Not in Ukraine. Let's do it in Des Moines." And I think —

Hillary: [HILLARY LAUGHS] That's exactly right.

Condi: — that that is the more that's —

Jon: I understand.

Condi: That's the bigger threat that the United States will not feel the, that the American people, will not feel the pull to continue to be the place that people can look when something awful like that happens.

Jon: But is it then the difference between the first Gulf War, which is, Saddam Hussein invades Kuwait and the United States forms a coalition and helps push him out versus the United States deciding these bad actors. You know, we really are the only country. It's not that other people don't meddle, but we're the only country that actively promotes regime change through military, you know?

Condi: Well, I, I think —

Jon: China builds up their power.

Condi: I think the people of Taiwan might disagree with you about the Chinese.

Jon: Well, they haven't done it.

Condi: But let me take, take on the question of, uh, first Gulf War, Second Gulf War.

Jon: Right.

Condi: Remember, first call four ended at an armistice. It didn't end the war.

Jon: Right.

Condi: And at that point, Saddam Hussein, uh, starts violating the terms of the armistice he's shooting at our, our aircraft. Uh, we think he's rebuilding weapons of mass destruction.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Condi: There's a lot to say that, uh, the first Gulf War simply postponed —

Jon: Right.

Condi: — uh, the troubles with Saddam, but I wanna, I wanna return to this question of now, because as you said, we can re-litigate or we can look at where we are now.

Jon: That's right.

Condi: Um, if I could say one thing to Americans out there today, it's if, if we are going to continue to be a place that believes we can have a role in making a more prosperous and peaceful world.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Condi: Then we're gonna have to stick with countries like Ukraine when something like this happens because they're actually not asking us to fight for them. They're asking us to give them the material to fight.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Condi: By the way, some of those, uh, those defense contractors are now trying to fire up lines so that we can get that to them.

Condi: And, oh, by the way, if you think we can stay safe and secure behind our oceans, let me just give you three dates.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Condi: 1941, 2001, and now. You really think we can stay, uh, isolated. We can't do it.

Jon: It's, I, I think, again, you know, we talked earlier a little bit about false choices. I don't think it's a question necessarily of staying isolated, but maybe it's a question of degrees of humility. Have we learned maybe the wrong lesson from World War II, which is the United States not only can promote these values, but we can control them? And part of that is that all these interventions lead me to believe that we've gotten to a point where we believe we can control events, not just influence them. And that's, that's the concern is —

Condi: I would not, I, you know, going back to the Situation Room, I don't think anybody said we can control events in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Jon: It's not that, but look, look at, look at the extent of our reach.

Hillary: No, I, I agree with that. And. I, I would just, I would just make a couple of points.

Hillary: One, I, I totally believe we need to be more humble. We need to have greater humility because even when we think we know what we're doing and we think we have the assets to deliver, on whatever goals and plans we have, things can always go wrong.

Jon: And it's real people on the ground that feel these things.

Hillary: It's real people.

Hillary: I mean, that's right. You know, I, I remember so well what happened to poor Jimmy Carter when he was trying to rescue the hostages in Tehran. I mean, he was the president. We had, you know, dozens of Americans being held hostage. He took a terrible chance and he lost.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Hillary: I also remember being in the situation room with, you know, President Obama with a small group advising, do we take the chance to go after this place we think maybe Bin Laden is?

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Hillary: It could have been a disaster and lucky for everybody, it turned out really well. So there is no guarantee. So of course we need more humility and, you know, in-in government, like any other aspect of life, there are some people who don't have enough of it, and we need to be sure that we have others in the room who can ask the right questions and push. But I do think that it's really hard in a world that is now so interconnected, informationally.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Hillary: That we would think about, um, pulling back, whether it's pulling back from bases or pulling back from, you know, supporting the brave people of Ukraine, because that would send a message that would be so misunderstood and I think give such aid and comfort to our adversaries that, that would have consequences as well.

Condi: Yeah, and you have to remember that if we leave a vacuum, it's not as if the vacuum will just stay there. Somebody will fill it. And now who are the candidates to fill it? Russia. You really would rather have Vladimir Putin, even though an Amer— an America who maybe isn't, uh, doesn't, isn't capable of delivering fully, would you really rather have Vladimir Putin. Xi Jinping in China. The, the idea that if the United States pulls back, you can leave this kind of



bucolic setting where everything will be okay. And when we intervene, we kind of mess it up and things get more turbulent. The —

Jon: Maybe it's the way we intervene. Maybe the question is, is not necessarily that we pull back, but that when we engage, we engage in a different way. And I'll give you just a little example. You know, we had to fight in this country for 15 years for our veterans to get healthcare for exposure to burn pits.

Condi: You've been, you've been great at that by the way.

Jon: But those burn pits are still in Afghanistan and Iraq. They are Superfund sites. The people who live in those places, you know, there are hundreds of thousands of people who are going to pass away from the effects of these things. When we intervene, is there a way that we can bolster our soft power?

Hillary: Mmm-hmm.

Jon: And, and bring those engagements while somehow consolidating? Because my concern is, we overextend ourselves. Empires die. And to a certain extent, our 800 bases are kind of an imperialist web that can, in many ways, hollow out our support here at home, where our infrastructure is in terrible danger. And other places are — is our hubris, are we, are we Icarus in this situation, with the military?

Condi: There, there there is, no doubt. There is no doubt that we have to be careful about being overextended.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Condi: But, but if you remember Hillary said there is diplomacy. And there is also development, right? And defense. And so —

Jon: And China's taken the development road, they've gone —

Condi: Well...

Jon: belt and road

Condi: Well, yeah. And uh, and you really wanna talk about bad projects with no safety, uh, standards

Jon: Oh I-I don't— and that's probably not their concern. They want to extract wealth from, from Africa.

Condi: They wanna — exactly. But-but I wanna make, I wanna make a different point. By talking so much about our military interventions

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Condi: We forget all of the other things that we have done to bolster other countries.

Jon: Right.

Condi: Uh, the President's emergency plan for AIDS relief, which we launched, which, which everybody continued

Jon: Right

Condi: To this day. Saved an entire continent in a pandemic. The amount of humanitarian relief, we are the first on the ground. If there's a hurricane, if there's a —

Jon: — Yes.

Condi: — tsunami, we're the first on the ground. We have always been the leading, uh, provider of food aid in the world.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Condi: And oh, by the way, we provided food aid to North Korea

Hillary: Mm-hmm, we did.

Condi: and to the Taliban because no American president believed that food ought to be used as a weapon.

Jon: Right.

Condi: So I think we have to have a broader look at what the United States has done since World War II.

Jon: No-no question.

Condi: And-and yes —

Jon: It's, it's more, uh, the, the question I'm, I'm asking is, can we rebalance it?

Condi: Well—

Jon: And, and, and that's really the issue.

Condi: That — (unintelligible) I think is a good question.

Hillary: The, I think that is a really important—

Condi: Yes.

Hillary: — and more than fair question. And, and I think the rebalancing, it means yes, we do need more resources and I, I think that we have shown, as Condi just said, that we can make such a difference. I mean, we did the Green Revolution —

Condi: Yes, and in need —

Hillary: You know, try to feed, you know, that massive, uh, country. We've, we've done so many things for the last 40, 50 years, and PEPFAR, you know, the president's program, uh, to combat, uh, HIV/AIDS, which President Bush started and everybody continued and it, it was just extraordinary commitment.

Jon: Mm-hmm.

Hillary: But how many Americans even know about it?

Condi: Yeah.

Hillary: It's so difficult, Jon, to get attention paid to what we do in diplomacy and particularly development, you know?

Jon: And maybe that's a legislative priority as well. Maybe. Maybe if we were more —

Hillary: — I think it's a

Condi: (unintelligible)

Hillary: — communications priority.

Condi: It's also, but, but Jon, I think, again, you know, your questions a really good one, and it's about, I don't think we'll fight a war in the Middle East of the kind that we did in Iraq. Maybe in my lifetime, uh, maybe for another generation. Uh, but the things that we've tried to do even in that country, to aid those people, to build a kind of functioning, we protected the Kurds from Saddam Hussein

Hillary: And still are —

Condi: And still are protecting the Kurds so —

Jon: Well, the Kurds also protected us.

Condi: Well, they did.

Jon: I mean, let's, let's be fair,

Condi: That's absolutely right.

Hillary: That's right.

Jon: Yeah.

Condi: Well, that's how you get good partners. But the, the State Department, you mentioned the, the budgets. Uh, Bob Gates, uh, who was Secretary of Defense with me and also with Hillary once said, there are more mil- people in military bands than there are in the foreign service.

Hillary: Mm-hmm.

Condi: Right?

Hillary: Mm-hmm.

Jon: Right.

Condi: So that's the place that you really ought to look and say, are we putting enough of our resources into the development and diplomacy side? Um...

Jon: And not just overseas, but in America, you know, you made an interesting point. Food as a weapon.

Hillary: We have to create a political consensus, both at home and abroad. [HILLARY CHUCKLES]

Jon: Right?

Hillary: About doing things that help people and make a difference. And I would argue, uh, you know, are good for our national security and good for our democracy.

Jon: Right.

Hillary: And, and part of our challenge and, and we both face this, is how do you convince, first of all, the congress, but also the public.

Jon.: Mm-hmm.

Hillary: — that doing this is in America's interest.

Condi: Right.

Hillary: And in fact, in American's interest.

Condi: Right, you know?

Jon: Maybe the question then is, and and, and this will be the last point and I'll, and I'll let you guys go, and I so appreciate you being here, is that balance again, if you look at Congress, there are more defense lobbyists than there are Congress people.

Hillary: Mm-hmm.

Condi: Yep. Right.

Jon: And when you talk about changing that conversation...

Hillary: Mm-hmm.

Jon: Maybe it's about the access of those people who are promoting that soft power, who, you know — maybe we just need to get, you know, those folks in front of Congress so that, as we talked about earlier, their view is so skewed.

Condi: Yeah.

Jon: Sometimes in Washington about the real needs of the people on the ground and maybe that information isn't flowing up to Congress well enough —

Condi: And we do have to get the word out to the American people.

Jon: Yep.

Condi: If you ask Americans, how much of our budget do we spend on foreign assistance, [HILLARY LAUGHING] they'll say 15 to 20%. Exactly. It's 1.5%. I see. So, uh, there is an education bit, uh, to do here too. And I'll just say this. Our predecessor many times, uh, removed George Marshall in order to sell the Marshall Plan, actually had to get on a train and go around American and America and tell the Americans about it.

Jon: All right!

Condi: That's what we have to do.

Jon: So we have, so that's —

Hillary: But think of the —

Jon: that's how we end this —

Hillary: — Well, but except...

Jon: — the two of you on a train,

Hillary: [EVERYONE LAUGHING] you, you've got it, you've gotta come with us!

Jon: I'm with you man. Listen. I'm happy to, to sit in there. Thank you both so much. It, it, it's such an important conversation and one that really, I, I think your points about educating and, and publicizing is, is such an important one because it is, we have to change those priorities and it's so important —

Hillary: —Before we quit.

Jon: Yeah.

Hillary: I wanna thank you publicly because, you know, I introduced the first bills on. Uh, taking care of the health of our first responders.

Jon: You were the one that got it done in the, if it hadn't have been for what you, you had done after that.

Hillary: But you, you know, when I, when I left to go be Secretary of State, your public championing of that cause was so important and I for one,

Jon: That's very kind of you.

Hillary: — was really grateful to you.

Condi: Likewise.

Jon: We were, we were standing on, on shoulders, including yours.

Condi: No, but but thank you.

Jon: Well, thank you guys very much. Yeah. And thank you both for being here and, and, and really being open to the larger conversation.

Hillary: Absolutely: To be continued.

Condi: To be continued

Jon: Secretary Clinton. Secretary Rice, thank you so much.

Condi: Thank you.

Hillary: Thank you.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

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