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COMMON GROUND COMMITTEE GMU

INTERVIEW WITH MARK ROZELL OPENING VOICE THEN

BRUCE BOND., PANEL: AMB SUSAN RICE, GEN DAVID

PETRAEUS, CRAIG MELVIN MODERATOR

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MARK ROZELL:

19:12:02;11

I would like to give a welcome to members of the George Mason University Foundation-- the George Mason University Board of Trustees, and the Board of Visitors, and also the Common Ground Committee-- Board of Directors. I can't name everybody. I apologize. And also a number of faculty members from the Schar School of Policy and Government are here. Thank you-- for being here. The director of our Michael Hayden Center on Intelligence and Public Policy, Larry Pfeiffer, who led-- a preprogram discussion with a number of our-- students in the Schar School with General Petraeus and Ambassador Rice.

19:12:39;17 And I would like to give a special welcome to also-- my colleague, and the namesake of the Hayden Center, General Michael Hayden and his wife, Jeanine are here. (APPLAUSE) All right. I want to also thank-- give thanks to the Common Ground Committee for their work in bringing these distinguished speakers here. And so let's start with the program. Thank you for coming.

(APPLAUSE)

19:13:10;22 (BREAK IN TAPE)

19:13:22;24 (VIDEO NOT TRANSCRIBED)

ANNOUNCER:

19:14:27;15 Now please welcome, Bruce Bond, cofounder and CEO of the Common Ground Committee. (APPLAUSE)

BRUCE BOND:

19:14:39;24 Good evening and welcome. I'd like to first thank the Schar School of Policy and Government here at George Mason University, and, in particular, Judith Wildy (PH) and Samantha Price, who have just been wonderful to work with. And on behalf of all of us at Common Ground Committee, thank

you all for being with us tonight.

19:14:57;24

We're delighted that you're here. And I'd also like to thank the Christian Science Monitor, our - media partner. And hopefully some of you had the opportunity to sit in on the seminar they did earlier today on the role of the media in the Trump era. Now you just saw a video about us. It told ya a little bit. We are a nonpartisan nonprofit. And our mission is to bring healing to the challenges of incivility and polarization that currently we face in this nation.

19:15:26;21

Our motto and our hope is to bring light, not heat, to public discourse. Now this will be our 11th public forum. And it-- the title of it is, Finding Common Ground On the New Cold War. Now before we start, just one housekeeping item. We ask that you please respect our request not to take any audio or video recordings of the event tonight. So thanks for that. And so let's get to it. First, I'd like to introduce you to our

moderator. You may have seen him on NBC News. He is the cohost of the *TODAY* show, and *MSNBC Live*. Please welcome Mr. Craig Melvin. (APPLAUSE) Sir?

CRAIG MELVIN:

19:16:17;22 Thank you. Thank you. How are (MIC NOISE) you?
Oh, that's--

BRUCE BOND:

19:16:21;14 That's not good.

CRAIG MELVIN:

19:16:21;24 --that's a great start. (LAUGHTER)

BRUCE BOND:

19:16:23;24 Now let me introduce you to our outstanding panel. He served in the U.S. Army for 37 years in the highest levels of leadership. And his last role was as the commander of the (NOISE) U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan. After retiring from the Army, he served as director of the CIA from 2010 to 2013. He is probably the most prominent military figure of the post 9/11 era, and is known and highly respected for his leadership role in the War on Terror. Please welcome General David Petraeus. (APPLAUSE)

19:17:14;15 She served as national security advisor from 2013 to 2017, and prior to that as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nation, where she helped shape U.S. foreign policy, and was a fierce promoter of human rights around the world. And she's written a new book. It's already number six on the *New York Times* Bestseller List. It's titled, *Tough Love: My Story of the Things Worth Fighting For*. Please welcome Ambassador Susan Rice. (APPLAUSE) Craig, the floor is yours.

CRAIG MELVIN:

19:18:00;08 All right, Bruce, thank you so much. How are we? (CROWD RESPONDS) Oh, no. We're gonna have--

AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE:

19:18:05;09 We're good. Come on.

CRAIG MELVIN:

19:18:05;24 --we're gonna have to-- let's try that--

AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE:

19:18:06;24 We're good. (CLAPPING)

CRAIG MELVIN:

19:18:07;15 --let's try that one more time. How are we?

(CROWD RESPONDS) Okay. All right. It's gonna be a lively night. Finding common ground on the new cold war, as all of you know, that's-- that's our topic tonight. And-- and who better to talk about it-- than Ambassador Rice and General Petraeus. So we are so honored to have both of you. But before we get to-- to the foreign policy aspect to the evening-- we thought it-- it would probably serve us well-- to take a look inside our own house-- first.

19:18:39;09

Because our country has entered-- historic territory with the impeachment process against President Trump. And when the proceedings were formalized-- House Speaker Nancy Pelosi-- as some of you probably recall, insisted that congress-- could pursue this process privately, now publically-- in a way that-- that heals, and does not divide. This is-- this is part of what the-- the House Speaker said at the time. Take a look.

19:19:18;24

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

19:19:23;13

(VIDEO NOT TRANSCRIBED)

CRAIG MELVIN:

19:20:33;18

"Healing rather than-- than dividing," is what the Speaker said. But, as you know, all but-- but two house Democrats voted to move forward with-- with-- with impeachment. No Republicans-- voted to move forward with impeachment. Most folks probably see impeachment as a domestic issue.

19:20:48;24

But-- there is something that sets this particular impeachment process, sets it apart from-- from the other three in our country's history. Because the contrast is, as-- as we discuss, this involves U.S. foreign policy. This involves the president of the United States allegedly-- in a phone call-- withholding aid-- threatening to withhold aid from a country unless that country-- approved the investigation of a political rival.

19:21:19;22

But, first of all, Ambassador, for folks who might not be familiar with-- with that process-- let's start micro here. Phone calls like the--

the one that's at the center of this impeachment, how are those phone calls usually conducted? And how is-- how is this particular phone call different from those?

AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE:

19:21:42;20

Well, thank you, Craig, for that. And, David, it's great to be with you again. Thank you to the Common Ground Committee, to Schar School-- and for all of you for coming tonight. The way these phone calls are supposed to work, and I have a fair bit of knowledge and experience with them having served as national security advisor, is that, in the first instance, the National Security Council Staff-- would craft a briefing memo for the president.

19:22:11;16

This is how it's typically worked in-- in prior administrations. That briefing memo would contain background and talking points for the president. The national security advisor would review and approve the memo. It would hopefully go to the president the night before at least, with ample

time for him to review it.

19:22:30;18

And then there would be-- a brief meeting in advance of a foreign call where the president, with his national security advisor and NSC staff have a brief consultation to be sure that the president has any questions he has as-- asked and answered, that any concerns about maybe the substance of the call are dealt with in advance. The call is placed.

19:22:53;22

The-- typically the national security advisor and/or deputy national security advisor would be with the president in the Oval Office, along with other key staff. The White House Situation Room will have connected the call, and will be taking copious notes on the call. And perhaps other staffers will be sitting in a listening room in the basement of the White House at the-- in the Situation Room, also-- taking notes on the call.

19:23:20;08

What's unusual about this call, very unusual, is

that clearly the president did not use any, maybe even all of the talking points prepared, and surprised the team in that regard. Because he didn't indicate in advance that he had some problem with them. He went on his own script. And the script bore no relation to U.S. policy and national interests. Our interests with respect to Ukraine are our deep concern about Russians-- continued occupation of-- of Ukrainian territory, the fact that there's still a hot war.

19:23:59;19

We are providing, and have been for years-- military as well as economic and political support to Ukraine. There's no discussion of that. There's no discussion of our longstanding emphasis on the anticorruption agenda. There's no policy in this phone call. And there's nothing in the phone call that is designed to advance or even address U.S. policy interests. Instead, the phone call relates primarily to the president's interest in seeking a favor, so to speak, from the Ukrainian-- president.

19:24:34;01

And those favors-- one, to conduct an investigation into a discredited conspiracy theory that Ukraine was involved with, somehow, the Democrats in the interference in our 2016 election rather than Russia, which is the unanimous judgement of our intelligence communities, and the bipartisan Senate Intelligence Committee. And, secondly, to generate an investigation-- into Joe Biden, and his son, Hunter Biden-- with the aim of trying to-- create dirt, that doesn't apparently exist, on a political opponent.

19:25:13;06

So both these objectives were not designed to serve the national interests, but rather the personal political interests of the president. And, as the president says, "Read the transcript." It's there. And all of the testimony that we have heard subsequently reinforces the broader concern that military assistance, \$400 million of badly needed assistance to a country

that is facing a hot conflict with a far superior power, and our adversary-- withheld, and the prospect of a White House meeting withheld-- as well, in order to leverage-- or extort, or whatever term you wanna use, a political favor for the president of the United States.

19:25:58;07

I've never seen anything approaching that in my over 25 years of serving two presidents-- throughout two administrations. I've never heard of it in the administrations in which I haven't served. It's-- it's highly unusual. And, in my judgement, it-- if-- if the facts all-- lash up to this conclusion, it's an abuse of power.

CRAIG MELVIN:

19:26:23;08

General, highly unusual and impeachable, or-- or just highly unusual?

GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS:

19:26:28;19

I'm not a constitutional law scholar. I'm a soldier (UNINTEL)--

AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE:

19:26:32;24

A darn good one. (LAUGHTER)

GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS:

19:26:35;11

--turned spy master. But, look, let me frame it for you if I could-- after saying that it's a privilege-- on stage with Ambassador Rice, and-- and also with Craig Melmon (SIC). Add my thanks as well to the Common Ground Committee-- to the Share School (SIC), and-- Schar School, and then also, frankly-- recognize Mike Hayden, who has been a true pillar-- in the intelligence community in the United States-- in uniform, and then after.

19:27:06;10

One of my fellow former DCIAs-- someone for whom I've had enormous respect over the years, and was incredibly supportive during the various four years in Iraq that I had, and a variety of other assignments. So, Mike, it's great to see you here. We are grateful for what you did in the past. We are grateful for what you are doing.

19:27:26;24

We're also grateful for you recovery. And we hope your voice will continue to be heard. You could

be in this seat right now, frankly. In fact, I'd prefer you were (LAUGHTER) given the first question. Just coincidentally, I happened to be in Ukraine-- around the time of the call, perhaps a little bit before it.

19:27:46;19

It was with former U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine, John Herbst, who runs a program at the Atlantic Council. I'm on their board. We went over together. We went up to the frontlines. I'd not been on the frontlines before. It's supposedly a frozen conflict. You couldn't tell that to the soldiers who were being shot at on a regular basis.

19:28:06;03

There are still casualties every week. It is a static frontline. But think of World War I with optics, drones, and a lot of snipers-- and you have the picture. And it was very, very clear to us the huge importance of U.S. assistance-- not just in terms of the security assistance funding, critical that i-- as that is-- but also the other

components of our assistance in helping them reform their defense department-- their military industries, their government.

19:28:39;24

And we met with all of the-- the major appointees, and the national security team-- of new President zelensky. Took a lot of hope away from this. Keep in mind that President Zelensky was-- was-- you know, he was-- really-- a comedian who used to play the president on TV, who was all of a sudden elected to be the president-- because they want reform.

19:29:03;17

And then subsequent to our visit, pretty quickly after that, the parliament is elected. He's got a unique opportunity. We wrote, "This was a time of great hope," in an op-ed piece-- for Ukraine. But it is still a time of considerable peril with Russia supporting the separatists-- in the southeastern part of the country-- and carrying out a variety of threatening activities.

19:29:26;04

And noting again the importance of continue. They merit our support. It should continue. And, by the way, giving credit to this administration, which had actually, prior to that time, delivered the shoulder launched antitank guided missiles that congress had authorized and appropriated for-- some years ago. So, again, then to hear that this was going on-- behind the scenes obviously is very concerning. And it is obviously, as Ambassador Rice said-- not the regular course-- of events.

CRAIG MELVIN:

19:30:00;24

Let us switch gears-- and-- and let's talk about the situation in Syria specifically. Former Defense Secretary James Mattis-- has said that President Trump's-- sudden withdrawal of U.S. troops-- from the-- from the border there with-- with Turkey-- has increased the chances of a resurgence of the Islamic State. This is part of what the secretary said.

19:30:32;20

(VIDEO NOT TRANSCRIBED)

CRAIG MELVIN:

19:30:55;14

First of all, our thanks to the Committee for using a clip from *Meet the Press*. (LAUGHTER) General Petraeus, I'll-- I'll-- I'll start with you. Do you share-- the general's assessment?

GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS:

19:31:05;02

Yeah, very much so. In fact, I wrote on this as well actually. This is very important to me-- and even went on Fox News to communicate with decision makers. (LAUGHTER) And so in this case-- I strongly agreed with Senator McConnell, who had assessed that this was a grave strategic mistake-- laid out why that was along the same lines.

19:31:32;18

And actually I had been heartened that we have gone back into at least part of the area-- that we were in before in supporting our Syrian Kurd partners. Keep in mind that we supported them in achieving our common security goal of defeating the Islamic State, taking away the caliphate-- that was in Iraq and Syria, very significant achievements of this administration, building on

the-- the foundation that was established by the previous administration in both countries-- a very significant success.

19:32:06;14

But as General Mattis noted, if you take your eye off this-- groups like al-Qaeda in Iraq can get back up on their feet, and become the Islamic State. (NOISE) So, again, this is a big concern. Now keep in mind, nobody, I think, understands the costs of war, and wants to end endless war more than those who are privileged to commend-- command our young men and women in uniform.

19:32:32;21

And, you know, having commanded both the surge in Iraq, and the surge in Afghanistan, and the region as U.S. central command-- I-- I know what the cost of war is. And so we fervently want this. But there's also reality. And very, very quickly there's five lessons that I think that we should've learned from the wars of the post 9/11 period. The first is that ungoverned spaces in the Muslim world will be exploited by extremists.

19:33:00;21

The second is you actually have to do something about it. You can't study it till it goes away, because it does not. In fact, in the meantime, it is spewing violence, extremism-- instability in a tsunami of refugees, not just in the neighboring countries, but all the way into Europe and our NATO allies, causing enormous populism in the democracies of that continent. Number three is the U.S. generally has to lead, but we do want to have a coalition. The coalition should be as big as we can make it, and it should include Muslim countries

19:33:30;02

The fourth is you have to acknowledge that you cannot counter terrorists with just counterterrorist force operations. You have to have a comprehensive approach. But we want the host nation, and this is what was developed, in fact, during the latter part of the Obama administration, you want to have the host nation doing the fighting on the frontlines, doing the

political reconciliation, the restoration of basic services, restoration of rule of law, local economies, all of that while we provide advice, assistance, training, equipping, and enabling in the form of drones, providing a picture of what the enemy is doing, precision-- airpower and-- and targeting-- and-- the fusion of intelligence in an industrial strength fashion, which Mike helped pioneer-- in early days that is so important.

19:34:18;06

And then, number five, you have to have a sustained commitment. This is a generational struggle, not the fight of a decade, much less a few years. But sustained commitment can only be maintained in a democracy if it sustainable in terms of blood and treasure. And, frankly, I thought we had achieved a sustainable posture in Syria.

19:34:40;24

1,500 troops is very affordable. 5,500 in Iraq, when you consider that there were 165,000 men and

women just in unit-- U.S. uniforms during the surge. 8,500 in Afghanistan. An enormous-- reduction since when-- the Ambassador was at the U.N.-- and I was the commander in Afghanistan. We had 100,000 Americans and 50,000 coalition.

19:35:05;16

So I think we really have to reflect on those lessons that I just offered, and then allow those to-- to guide your policy And, of course, what General Mattis was talking about was that final one. And, as he noted, Ambassador Crocker used to say, a great partner during the surge in Iraq-- "You can leave the movie theatre, but the movie continues to roll."

19:35:29;12

And it-- at times we have-- a rhetoric has gotten a bit ahead of us when we have said we have ended the war in fill in the blanks. We didn't. We ended our involvement in the war. And, unfortunately-- it came back. And we had to go back into-- some of those situations.

CRAIG MELVIN:

19:35:50;17

Ambassador-- let me turn to you. Two questions. First of all, in-- in broad terms, what should-- what should our role be in-- in Syria? And President Trump's decision to withdraw-- those troops, what message did that send to our allies in the region? What message did it send to our-- our-- our-- our allies-- at large?

AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE:

19:36:12;13

Well, I very substantially agree with General Petraeus' assessment of the implications for our fight against ISIS of the abrupt decision to withdraw U.S. forces from northern Syria. And not only does that mean that the Kurds, who had really been the pointy end of the spear in our strategy to defeat ISIS, the Kurds and the Syrian--

GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS:

19:36:36;24

Over-- over 10,000 lost.

AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE:

19:36:38;24

--men and women. Because-- it's-- it's a force that is comprised of men and women fighters. Over

10,000 lost. These are people to whom we gave a moral commitment that we would be partners with them, that we would not abandon them. And yet we did. And the-- the strategic catastrophe here, and I-- I really do think it is, is multifaceted. It's, one, the pressure is now off of ISIS.

19:37:11;12

These Kurds don't have the wherewithal to keep that pressure on, because they have to worry about having lost their-- historic homeland to Turkey. And they are facing military pressure from Turkey. So the pressure's off ISIS. But, secondly, this method that we have evolved now, that General Petraeus outlined, of working with local partners, having those local partners be the principal element in the fight against terrorists on their soil, as the Iraqi government-- was against ISIS, and as the Syrian Democratic Forces, the pr-- Kurd and Arab elements were in Syria, is now a s-- a tack-- an approach that is at risk.

19:37:57;21

Because what local forces are gonna wanna partner with the United States, with our training, support, and equipment, if the message we're sending is that when we're done, and we wake up in the morning, and something has caused us to change our mind, we walk away? And not only do we walk away, we leave them to the wolves, which is what the Turks are to the Kurds.

19:38:19;20

And so this is really dangerous in the sense that we may not be able to-- to continue to replicate this model, which is economical for us, as General Petraeus said, in terms of blood and treasure. Secondly-- in withdrawing our forces, and allowing the Turks to come in, who have arguably committed atrocities and war crimes-- we have also abandoned our facilities that now the Russians have moved into with Syrian forces.

19:38:48;18

There are now Russian flags flying on U.S. constructed bases that until two months ago were ours. So Russia has benefitted. ISIS has

benefitted. Turkey's benefitted. Assad has benefitted. Iran has benefitted. It is not at all clear to me how this is beneficial to U.S. interests. And final point I'd make is I think the Pentagon, to its credit, tried to construct a rationale that would persuade the president, post facto, to leave some forces in Syria.

19:39:25;15

I think the Pentagon intends them to be in there to be able to keep an eye on ISIS, to the extent they can. But the only way they could persuade the president to do that, it appears, was to suggest that they be-- left behind in certain places to guard the oil installations. And so if you listen to the president's public explanations for why that rump force remains in Syria, it's all about the oil.

19:39:52;08

And the danger of that is that is exactly the terrorists' narrative, that's the autocrats' narrative-- for how the U.S.-- is motivated in that region, and what our actual interests are.

That's not, in fact, what our actual interests are, to take the oil, to hold the oil. But when we say that, it is-- it is fuel for the terrorists' narrative, and our adversaries' narrative. So it's dangerous on all these different dimensions.

CRAIG MELVIN:

19:40:23;20

That was-- that was the narrative in Iraq-- as you know, one of them. Common ground-- that's-- that's what we're supposed to be talking about.

GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS:

19:40:33;05

Well, let me actually clarify. I mean, we didn't go into Iraq to seize the oil. And there was never--

CRAIG MELVIN:

19:40:36;24

Correct.

GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS:

19:40:37;10

--a justification.

AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE:

19:40:37;24

That's what I'm saying. We didn't. But-- but when-- when the president suggests that that's a motivation, it creates that impression.

CRAIG MELVIN:

19:40:44;15 Is-- is there common ground to be found with--
with regards to Syria at this point, or have we--

GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS:

19:40:52;19 Common ground b-- between whom?

CRAIG MELVIN:

19:40:54;07 --common ground with regards to-- to our policy.
I mean, is-- is there-- is there someplace
between?

GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS:

19:40:58;17 The-- the leader of the-- the most powerful
congressional leader-- in the president's party--
pub-- publically wrote that this was a grave
strategic mistake. That would indicate that there
is certainly common ground between the Republican
leadership on this issue. And I would think-- the
internationalists among (NOISE) the Democratic
leadership as well.

19:41:27;10 Keep in mind, we're talking about 1,500 troops
here. This is not, again, 100,000. This is
affordable. And we do know that if you take your

eye off an extremist group, even after you have defeated them, and taken away their caliphate, keeping in mind that what we took away was the ground caliphate, not the virtual caliphate, not the caliphate in cyberspace, which the Islamic State has been particularly-- talented in exploiting.

19:41:55;15

That's the distinguishing feature between the Islamic State and al-Qaeda-- is they first did establish an actual ground entity. And, second, the facility with which they exploited social media and internet capabilities-- was really quite impressive, and very, very dangerous. Because when they were winning, they were recruiting-- individuals from all around the world.

19:42:20;18

Tens of thousands of fighters flocked to Syria and Iraq to be part of-- you know, nothing succeeds like success. (NOISE) Nothing fails like failure either. And we have-- again, the previous

administration, which got this going, and this administration deserve enormous credit. I felt for a good two or more years that there were very significant improvements made by this administration, building on what the Obama administration got started. And so this is, obviously, a divergence from the course on which we were set.

AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE:

19:42:58;04

And, Craig, I think the simple answer to your question is there was a overwhelming bipartisan vote in congress expressing grave concern about this decision. So the-- the common ground, if that's your measure, is self evident. The outlier in this instance was-- was not, you know-- on a partisan basis. It was a decision that the-- that the president took.

CRAIG MELVIN:

19:43:21;04

I wanna go back to something that you-- you-- you said, Ambassador-- about our ally-- Turkey. What-- what has this revealed, for you, about Turkey, and-- and perhaps its-- its intentions?

AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE:

19:43:36;23

Well, I don't know that it's revealed a lot about Turkey. I think we've been seeing over the years-- many different indications that Turkey's-- reliability is-- unfortunately questionable under Erdogan. First of all, part of the reason why the ISIS threat evolved as far and as fast as it did is because that foreign fighters were allowed to flow through Turkey for years into Syria unchecked.

19:44:06;24

So Turkey was not playing the role of an ally in terms of thwarting a very clear cut terrorist threat. Then-- Turkey took quite a long time to agree to the-- to allow the United States to base its forces that were fighting-- ISIS out of our-- our shared bases in Turkey. Turkey has-- decided to purchase an air defense system from Russia that profoundly undermines our capacity to cooperate with Syria, as well as our NATO allies.

19:44:49;02

They didn't need to do that. That was an

affirmative choice they made. Syri-- Turkey's been moving in Russia's direction rather steadily-- since 2000-- 2015, 2016. And then, moreover, Erdogan continues to-- entrench his own power, and-- commit a pretty shocking range of human rights abuses against-- political dep-- opponents, very, very broadly defined. I mean, hundreds of thousands locked up.

19:45:25;24

So there are many ways in which Turkey's behavior is-- evolving in a negative direction, and-- and is, in my judgement, of real concern. Now, most recently, since the Turkish-- incursion or invasion of Syria, they're sending, you know, s-- s-- tens of ISIS-ed prisoners, terrorists, family members back to Europe, and even to the United States, without coordination and consultation.

19:45:57;06

There's basically a dump. And I'm not sure that's how allies treat allies either. So the-- the Turks, you know, have had longstanding, and-- and, in many instances, legitimate concerns about

the Kurds, not so much these Kurds, but the Kurds in general. And we have worked to try to understand, and-- and be supportive of their legitimate concern about terrorism, particularly as it's emanated from within Turkey and from Iraq.

19:46:26;22

But to paint everybody with one brush, and to basically threaten to mow them over when they were, in effect, under protection, and to roll out the red carpet to do that, that was-- the shock was really on our side as far as I was concerned. The Turks interests have been constant in this regard. And they saw an opening. And they took it.

CRAIG MELVIN:

19:46:51;24

General, the concerns that the Ambassador just way-- just raised about Turkey-- we have reportedly-- several dozen nuclear weapons-- at-- at a military base in Turkey, one of our largest there in the region. Should those-- should those nukes be evacuated? Should they be taken-- taken

out of Turkey?

GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS:

19:47:09;24 First of all, I'm not even sure that I can
acknowledge-- the presence of nuclear weapons in--
-

AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE:

19:47:14;24 Anywhere.

GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS:

19:47:14;24 --any country-- much less in a specific country.
Second, what I would offer here is--

AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE:

19:47:22;06 Another point of common ground. (LAUGHTER)

CRAIG MELVIN:

19:47:25;20 I said, "Reportedly."

GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS:

19:47:27;04 --here is (THROAT CLEARING)-- you know, what you
have to do better is-- see, what you normally do
is you say, "Well, according to David Sanger's
book."

CRAIG MELVIN:

19:47:35;19 Right. Right. (LAUGHTER) Okay. Sure.

GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS:

19:47:36;24

We actually did-- according to that, reportedly-- but in the case I'd actually wanna point out that, again, Turkey is-- in a crucial geostrategic position. It has a very important-- base, actually a number of very important bases, but one in particular, Incirlik Air Base. It has been a decent partner in certain respects.

19:48:01;03

It is-- a NATO ally. And we need to do as much as we can to avoid a real rift-- that ends up rupturing a relationship of many, many decades-- because of one or more individuals. And we need to get through this period with them-- I really believe. And-- and-- and there are some legitimate security concerns that Turkey has had about the so-called YPG, which is the Syrian Democratic Forces-- that they are very closely related to the Turkish Kurd terrorist group, the PKK.

19:48:41;05

But we were working very hard to reassure them.

We had run, I think, six or more joint patrols. We were mapping out a buffer zone. And then, all of a sudden, this very sudden nature-- of what they did in the decision making process here-- has had reverberations. I was just in the Middle East-- this past week at a gathering in the UAE that brings every year together many of the serving, and former foreign ministers, and others at a conference.

19:49:11;13

And this does have implications. It does cause questioning. One of the issues that I was asked about during that conference as a panel was, "How do we restore deterrence relative to Iran?" And as everyone in this audience knows, deterrence is a function of capabilities and will. Well, we have actually shored up our capabilities in the Gulf region.

19:49:36;23

We've put-- added 14,000 troops or so in the GC-- the Gulf Cooperation Council countries. But so that's much better. The will component has been

called into question a bit-- by this particular action, and also by the fairly modest-- responses to quite provocative actions by Iran in the past. (THROAT CLEARING) I don't wanna scratch something here, but the redline that turned out not to be a redline, even though the outcome, ultimately of a diplomatic process that was led by our friends, the Russians, did remove 90% of the chemical weapons from Syria, did reverberate around the country, I-- or around the world.

19:50:21;24

I travel the world still. And I was told in places as far out as southeast Asia that don't think that that only reverberates in the issue of Syria or the Middle East, it has consequences further out. And that is what is actually-- these are the issues. There are obvi-- always questions what's going on in Washington.

19:50:46;24

But the bigger issues are around what are the U.S. responses going to be-- to provocation-- to actions of-- adversaries and so forth. And I

think those are hanging out there. Those questions are actually-- being asked-- in that region. In fact, I go back this weekend again. And I'm sure that we will have some more discourse on those topics.

CRAIG MELVIN:

19:51:13;13

Let's shift our conversation to-- to China-- for a moment. There have been a number of-- of headlines here-- recently-- basically asserting that we've entered a new cold war-- with China. Former CIA director and defense secretary, Leon Panetta-- back in June, speaking with Axios-- on HBO, claimed that Russia and China had joined forces.

19:51:34;17

And I think we'll-- we can put it on the screen here, part of-- of what-- Secretary Panetta said, "I think we're living at a dangerous place in our history. The biggest concern we have now is that Russia is working with China. We have never seen that kind of-- of working relationship. They have great cyber capabilities. They have capabilities

in space.

19:51:53;04

Two of our strongest adversaries are now working together to try to undermine stability in the United States. We need to wake up to that threat." I spent some time-- with former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley-- last weekend-- who made a similar assertion-- that-- that China has become-- our preeminent threat. Ambassador, is that-- is that accurate? Is that hyperbole?

AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE:

19:52:19;17

Which? Nikki Haley's comment or Panetta's?

CRAIG MELVIN:

19:52:23;05

Well, I think the comments are-- are somewhat similar. But we'll start with Secretary Panetta's comment.

AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE:

19:52:27;05

Okay. Well, the-- the interesting thing about Secretary Panetta's comment is his assertion that Russia and China are working in lockstep in virtually every dimension. As a former U.N. ambassador, I have seen Russia and China work in

lockstep-- to a great extent at the United Nations for years. That's not new.

19:52:49;12

And, you know, rarely, rarely, if ever, did they break from one another on issues of consequence to-- the-- so they s-- were together on North Korea. They were together on Ukraine for the most part. So they're-- that is got a long tail to it. I-- I actually think there's some degree of exaggeration in Secretary Panetta's suggestion that in every one of the dimensions, military, you know, economic, political-- cyber, that they're coordinating.

19:53:21;24

But they're very close in their interests. And they certainly share an interest in weakening the United States. They're approaching it through different means. And I think one of the challenges we face as we confront these two significant-- competitors or adversaries, is that we ourselves should not rush to lump them together. And I worry that our national security

strategy-- that was released now almost a couple years ago, and the national defense strategy, if you read it carefully, alluded (?) Russia and China in almost every sentence.

19:53:55;12

Rarely do we treat them separately. And they are separate. And they have different interests. And they pose different challenges. And to the extent that we lump them together, I fear that we encourage their collaboration and bandwagoning (SIC)-- in ways that are detrimental to our interests. So China is-- is a very serious challenge. It is as-- General Petraeus likes to say, you know, "The most important-- relationship the United States has."

19:54:24;23

When we were in the Obama administration, we often used to call the U.S./China relationship, "The most consequential relationship in the world." That is true both in terms of our competition and our potential for cooperation. And China is certainly acting far more

aggressively both economically and in the-- in the security realm-- the cyber realm, and you name it.

19:54:48;24

But I don't think that China is angling for-- an imminent conflict with the United States. And I think how we manage the Chinese challenge-- will dictate the-- the relative risk of that-- conflict emerging. We can talk about the trade war sep-- separately. Russia's a different situation. Russia is-- a reventious (?) power. It is actively trying to-- undermine-- the NATO alliance, is actively trying to-- bite off pieces of neighboring countries, as we saw in Georgia, and now more recently in Ukraine.

19:55:29;08

It's very much involved in trying to internally weaken and divide us here in the United States, actively working both sides of every contentious issue to cause Americans to turn against each other, and to undermine our faith in our own institutions and our democracy. So I think Russia

poses a more proximate and immediate danger. But I think China is our longest-- or long term competitor of-- of greatest consequence.

GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS:

19:56:01;24

Let me just-- build on that, again, having found quite a bit of common (LAUGH) ground on this particular issues. I-- first of all, I-- I would state upfront that my sense has been that the-- that China's relationship with Russia is much more transactional than it is a deep-- form of quasi alliance, or something like that.

19:56:23;20

I do want to underscore-- what Ambassador Rice said about, again, and which I've said repeatedly, that the U.S./China relationship is far and away the most important and the most consequential-- in the world. And, by the way, not just to the U.S. and China, but to the entire world.

19:56:42;07

I very much want to see this be a relationship that is mutually beneficial-- that-- that does--

help the citizens of-- of each country. Without question, this is not only the relationship, this is the biggest trading relationship we had until the sanctions. But clearly China is also our biggest strategic competitor.

19:57:06;06

And-- and they understand this. We understand that. I don't know that a cold war is the bests analogy. If you think about the Cold War, it was between the U.S. led west, and the Soviet led east. There was virtually no economic relationship. We sold some excess wheat every now and then. But it probably didn't even amount to-- billions of dollars.

19:57:28;24

The relationship, again, between the U.S. and China-- was the single biggest trading relationship for each of our two countries. So, again, I think you have to understand that. And, of course, we're also in a nuclear era. And certainly we were during the Cold War. But the idea of something beginning to escalate, needless

to say, has enormous potential consequences.

19:57:54;24

We may be in the early stages of some kind of technology cold war-- because of the concerns-- about supply chains, and the trust in components-- and so forth. And you see movement, in some cases, of manufacturing facilities, not just because labor costs in China are going up-- but because of, again, supply churn-- chain concerns, and the, again, the elements of the sanctions that have had to do-- with some of the technology firms.

19:58:26;24

And it is a fact that the-- there is a fracturing of what used to be a global-- the worldwide web-- in that there-- there are interferences with that, the Great Firewall of China, some other countries-- attempting to do that. Whether that is beneficial in the long run, if you're trying to be an innovative society or not, I think remains to be seen. That is as space that I'm very, very concerned about. And, again, here I

also hope that somehow or other, we can not only resolve sort of the easy quote-- "Trade issues," the phase one issues being addressed, but that we can go way beyond that, and that we could get back to addressing the issues of trust, and confidence, and so forth-- that could remove some of the concerns in the technology arena. But that may be-- proved to be quite challenging.

CRAIG MELVIN:

19:59:18;15

I wanna go back to the-- to the trade-- war for just a moment. Ambassador Rice, that you mentioned, not to oversimplify it here, but-- a lot of Americans-- have-- have said that-- China wasn't playing by the rules, and the president was right to call them out on it, and then-- and then act on it. What-- what should be the next step-- in-- in this-- this trade conflict with chi-- with China?

AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE:

19:59:43;09

Well, I think that the challenge that we have-- yes, of course, we have longstanding and-- and deep seated economic concerns with respect to

the-- China's-- practices that go way beyond the trade deficit. I mean, the deficit, as General Petraeus just said, is really kinda the tip of the iceberg, and the easiest thing to rectify.

20:00:03;15

But it's the structural elements of their competition-- the relationship between the state and the private sector, the way they are squeezing out U.S., and foreign companies, and the like that are far greater concern. And the problem is that rather than approach our concerns with China, maximally armed with all of the-- support we could muster, which would mean acting in concert with our European partners, and Canada, and South Korea, and Japan, that share these concerns that we have with China's economic practices, we have separately alienated them in the trade space, and started trade conflicts with them, so that Canada is facing steel and aluminum tariffs on national security grounds.

20:00:56;24

The theory-- we're saying to Canada that they

threaten our national security by virtue of their steel and aluminum industry, a country that has served with us and fought with us in every major conflict that we've been engaged in since long before-- any of us were born. We have gotten into trade disputes, and-- and we are threatening major tariffs on our European partners, and posed some already.

20:01:22;08

So we're not bringing them with us to this challenge, which would increase our leverage and our efficacy in combatting the Chinese threat. Rather, we are sort of being divided and conquered-- and being conquered. This trade war is serving nobody's interests. Americans are paying the costs of these tariffs out of our pockets.

20:01:43;24

It's not that China's putting money into the U.S. Treasury. That's a fallacy. And-- as a consequence, those that we're hoping to advantage, our farmers and manufacturers, are, in fact, suffering in some significant ways. China's

suffering too. There are no winners in this.

20:02:02;24

And how do we get out of it? That's a good question at this point. Because either, you know, we stay, and double down, and-- and, you know, tighten the screws at our own expense, until we hope that China relents. And if you know anything about China and their system, that's-- hard to envision in anything like the immediate future, or we relent, and we cut a tiny deal, probably around, you know-- t-- the-- agricultural products, and-- and some minor aspects of-- the trade deficit, that brings us back to not even where we were before the trade war started.

20:02:47;01

And all these other major issues get left to the side. So, in other word, we would've fought a very lengthy, costly-- trade war to essentially return to not quite the status quo ante. That's what this phase one deal looks to be on track to do. And so I don't see how either outcome is beneficial.

GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS:

20:03:10;08

You know, it-- what we need really is-- is the biggest of the big ideas in American foreign policy should acknowledge that, again, the most important relationship in the world is that between the U.S. and China, and that we need a coherent and comprehensive approach to China. Coherent means that is clear priorities established-- that every action you take should be filtered through a prism that asks, "What will the effect of this be on our foreign policy for China?"

20:03:41;24

And don't get this wrong now. I'm not talking about, again, everything here is conflictual. Because, again, we want this to be mutually beneficial to the greatest possible extent. But, as Ambassador Rice mentioned, comprehensive means it's not just every tool in our toolbox, it's not just military, the rebalance to Asia, it's not just trade, economic, diplomatic-- and so forth, it is actually whole of governments.

20:04:11;24

Because we wanna do this with all of our partners. And, frankly, if you asked-- if you ran the question about the transpacific partnership-- through that prism, noting that, of course, both candidates actually opposed it during the-- the campaign, but one, I think, would've probably found a way to get back to it, given that she had sold it for four years as secretary of state-- if you ran that through that, you would acknowledge that the benefits of the transpacific partnership aren't purely economic.

20:04:42;22

In fact, they were fairly modest economically. The real benefits were the geostrategic benefits that we're going to form a whole economic community with partners that would enable us, when we then do sit down with China-- to have an awful lot of-- fellow travelers with us. And the same with the G7 countries. The same with our NATO allies.

20:05:06;15

Now, again, don't get me wrong, there's a lot of reason to be frustrated with some of our allies who are not doing all that they should, who aren't spending not only the 2% of GDP they agreed to spend, but not even 1.5% in some cases, despite running fiscal surpluses. But look again, if you recall that the most important relationship is that between the U.S. and China, that's the biggest plate of all the plates that we're keeping spinning.

20:05:33;10

You then defer that is the priority. That's the main effort, as the military would term it. And you work everything toward that end. And you do it with all the tools, all the partners, all the allies, and all the possible-- elements you can bring to bear.

CRAIG MELVIN:

20:05:49;23

Let's-- let's talk about-- leadership and-- and civil discourse for a moment. Ambassador-- you said something in Charleston-- yesterday or the day before. When were you there?

AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE:

20:06:01;10 Yesterday.

CRAIG MELVIN:

20:06:01;23 Yesterday. (LAUGH)

AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE:

20:06:02;24 I think.

CRAIG MELVIN:

20:06:04;14 In God's country, as I call it. I'm-- a native South Carolinian. And-- and you talked about one of the greatest threats. Actually I believe you said, "The greatest threat," that-- that's facing us is basically the divisions that-- that we've created in-- in-- in this country. What-- what did you mean by that? And-- and how do we, I know it's a big question, but how do we repair those divisions?

AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE:

20:06:29;21 Well, I write in my book, *Tough Love*, in the final chapter-- called, *Bridging the Divide*, about our national political divisions, and how I believe they constitute our greatest national security vulnerability. And I say that for many

reasons, but I'll give you two examples. The first is that our political dysfunction is literally preventing us from getting basic things done that most Americans agree on.

20:07:02;24

We are not in a position to compete effectively with China on-- in the 21st century in the economic sphere, because we can't even agree to spend infrastructure money. We can't repair our roads, our bridges, our airports. We can't lay broadband where it's needed. Because congress can't agree even on the basic stuff.

20:07:23;12

And that is impeding our competitiveness. And it's competing frank-- impeding, frankly, our ability to remain an effective global leader. But the second thing I'll point you to, and we've touched on it already, is that our adversaries have come to understand that our domestic political divisions are something they could work to their own advantage.

20:07:46;20

And that's what Russia has been doing so avidly for several years. And not just in the context of the 2016, or the 2018, or the 2020 election. But everyday through social media, and other means, the Russians are pitting us against each other. They're throwing salt in the wounds of our domestic divisions. And whether the issues are race, or immigration, or gay rights, or guns, they pick the most divisive issues.

20:08:18;13

And they don't have a perspective on what is the right side. They just want people on both sides to doubt each other, to fear each other, to hate each other. And they're smart. They understand that if they can cause us basically to eat us-- ourselves alive, to distrust and divide ourselves so profoundly that we doubt our common experience and commitment as Americans, that we doubt our institution, that we start to doubt democracy itself, then they can weaken us.

20:09:01;00

They can obtain-- a relative superiority, defeat

us, if you will, without ever firing a bullet. And that's what they're working to do. So that's why I say our domestic political divisions are our greatest national security vulnerability. What do we do about them? Well, I also write in the last chapter of *Tough Love* that this something that I have some personal experience with, and it's something we all have national experience with.

20:09:28;08

I have two children, two wonderful, bright, passionate, committed kids. One of them is a very conservative Republican. One of them is a progressive Democrat. And my husband and I sit at the dinner table trying to keep the food from flying. (LAUGHTER) And yet-- and-- and it's hard. I mean, I'll-- it's-- it's-- it's very hard to-- to deal with those differences. But we do. Because we love each other. And we're committed to remaining whole as a family.

20:10:02;03

And we recognize that what binds us is so much

greater than what we may differ on in the political sphere, and in the policy sphere. And we've made that commitment despite the difficulty, because we know what truly matters. And, in some ways, what I and so many of us are dealing with in our family lives is a microcosm of what we're facing on a national level. We have a choice to make. We can stay whole. We can work through our differences.

20:10:29;16

We can prioritize that which we share. Or we can allow those divisions to re-- to rend us apart. And there're many things we can do about it from the very personal in how we interact with our fellow Americans, whether we listen, whether we understand, whether we seek to hear, and-- and und-- and appreciate the perspectives of those that may be unfamiliar or differ from us, how we teach our kids. We don't teach civic education anymore.

20:10:58;24

Our kids think that they can (LAUGH), you know,

grow up and-- and not actually understand what our Constitution is about, what the separations of pow-- of powers really means, that free speech doesn't mean I can say anything I want, but if it-- if I get offended by what you say, it's a problem. That's-- no, that's not what our system is. We have young people in universities who get very upset if, you know, they hear from speakers that represent perspectives that they violently disagree with.

20:11:31;02

But that's why you go to college and get an education is to learn, and to stretch yourself, and to engage perspectives that you differ with, whether you're on the left or the right. So there's work we need to do in our educational space. And then I think there are a number of very important political reforms we need to consider. Because, frankly, the way our system is structured at the moment, it rewards the extremes.

20:11:57;13

And so whether we're talking about the role of money in politics, and particularly dark money, whether we're talking about how our congressional districts are drawn that are designed to feed the extremes, whether we're talking about (LAUGH), you know, the elimination of the earmark, which, at the time, seemed like a great idea. We're not gonna have this guy be able to put pork barrel money into his own district. But guess what? Earmarks meant that members of congress from both sides of the aisle had to work together to get something done that was mutually beneficial.

20:12:31;00

It was actually a glue that-- or better-- better put, a grease that-- facilitated actual legislation. And so there's a lot we can do. We can-- we can look at rank choice voting, which is something that is now done in Maine, and that New York City just approved, which I won't belabor, but it's a method of voting in our primaries and general elections that causes voters to not just pick the person from their party that they may

wanna vote for, but figure out if you-- "If I can't have my first choice, who's my second choice? Who's my third choice?"

20:13:11;05

So there's a whole series of things we can do in the political sphere in terms of reform. And then finally I argue that we ought to very seriously consider mandatory national service. And by that I would-- what I mean is certainly you can choose to-- to sign up for the military, but I'm talking about mandatory civilian service for everyone in this country the ages of 18 to 22.

20:13:36;10

If for six to 12 months, people from vastly different backgrounds, and all socioeconomic stations, and all religions, and all races, and all geographies had to work together, live together, and collaborate on projects that benefit the common good, whether it's laying broadband, or reforestation, or re-- refurbishing inner city schools, then they'd have to actually know each other, and listen to each other.

(APPLAUSE)

20:14:08;10

And it's why, in the past, in-- in-- in different times, the-- the-- the military has been a place where people have come together. We can replicate that notion in the civilian realm, because, as I certainly have learned, it's really hard to hate someone when you actually know them. And that's what I think we need to find a way to do.

CRAIG MELVIN:

20:14:34;21

General, before you-- you-- you-- you take a bite at this one, I-- I want to call-- the audience's attention to the microphones. After the General-- answers this, then we'll take a few questions here from the audience as well. But, General Petraeus?

GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS:

20:14:48;03

Well, this past spring I was actually asked-- to do a speech on the state of democracy in America. And I said in the remarks, you know, the fact that you're asking a soldier to do this might indicate the gravity of the situation. (LAUGHTER)

But I titled that speech, Disrupted. And it really was-- it's not truly the state of democracy in America. There are many states or municipalities where democracy is working quite admirably.

20:15:17;15

It's really the state of democracy in Washington. And it's what Ambassador Rice highlighted here. It is the hollowing out of the center. And that's a result of party primaries, as you noted, which pull you further and further. 'Cause it's the base, the activists that vote in primaries. So naturally your fear is that you get out-- you get primaried (PH).

20:15:37;20

And, of course, we've made these districts bright red and bright blue. Both parties do it. And I hope, by the way, Virginia will undo some of the-- I think-- there might be temptations to do something. Let's try to align boundaries with, again, normal municipalities, and not draw these ones that make it really Republican or really

Democratic.

20:16:01;14

It is social media, and silo-ed news channels-- that become echo chambers for different views. And they just reinforce-- one's predispositions. It is money in politics. It's a lack of civics education, and all the rest of this. And the result is that the government in Washington cannot even keep the government open sometimes, much less actually pass budgets. I mean, we all love the military.

20:16:32;07

Well, if we love 'em so much, why can't we pass a budget before the start of the fiscal year, instead of having them operating, we're now into the second month of a continuing resolution. Again, this is not good, much less spend on infrastructure, education, immigration reform, and a host of other challenges. And there is a huge imperative at this time. Because what we have might be described as the return of history with a vengeance.

20:17:02;02

Remember the article in 1989. Francis Fukuyama wrote this very prescient article describing history as a competition between different political and economic systems. And he predicted that the Soviet led communist party with a command economy was going to collapse of its own weight in the face of the U.S. led western democracies and free market capitalist-- economies. And we enjoyed a 25 year period or so where our system was viewed as the zenith when it came to, again, political and economic systems.

20:17:42;24

Well, now if you look at the U.S. and the-- the west, most of the major democracies are-- are dealing with some degree of populism. The U.K. has Brexit, France has had the Yellow Jackets, Italy can't keep a government for more than a year, year and a half, Spain can't even form a government, and on and on. And, meanwhile, we are competing-- there is a new competition-- as we have described earlier.

20:18:07;24

And in this case the competitor is a meritocratic one party system with what's called state capitalism, which is hypercompetitive capitalism, albeit with large state owned enterprises in the system. And it has enabled this particular country to grow for over 40 years at a rate that no large economy has ever achieved in the history of the world. And this is, of course, China-- some 40 years since Deng Xiaoping welcomed the world to China.

20:18:39;02

So, again, we have to get our act together both for ourselves, and to address the issues that are very clear and evident to all of us, but also because there is a new competition. And other countries are watching. And many of them are gonna say, "You know, that's not a bad example." And yet if you truly believe, as I think most in this room do, if we agree with Churchill who famously said that, "Democracy is the worst form of government--

AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE:

20:19:10;11 Except the others.

GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS:

20:19:10;16 --except for all the others--" then we've gotta make that true again. And so these are very specific issues that can be dealt with. Some of them have to be dealt with at the state level. Others have to be dealt with nationally. But they are doable if the will is there. And I hope that it will be. Because clearly we cannot continue with this divide being-- and where compromise-- is a word that seems to have gone out of the lexicon of many of those who are on the high ground in Washington in particular.

CRAIG MELVIN:

20:19:47;02 Think we have time for a few questions. We'd ask that (NOISE)-- that you use the-- the microphones. Sir, with your hand up, feel free to--

MALE VOICE (UNIDENTIFIED):

20:19:57;12 My name is Sully Hudyer (PH). I am a Uighur American. And-- my question is for both-- General

Petraeus and Ambassador Rice. Y'all talked-- y'all touched the issue of China. But (NOISE) now according to the DOD, as of May 2019, China has some three million-- Uighurs locked up in concentration camps, including-- 100 of my own relatives.

20:20:22;03

I'm sorry. I'm getting a bit emotional. But what can the U.S. government, or what can and should the U.S. government do to prevent another 21st-- to prevent a 21st century holocaust from happening? Because some of my relatives have already been killed. In one camp alone, radio (UNINTEL) reported, in a six month period, over 150 people were killed.

20:20:48;11

The *New York Times* just revealed 400 plus pages of internal Chinese documents detailing the systematic genocide that China has planted in the name of counterterrorism. So when is the United States, and when is the free world going to act? What can they do to stop this from happening?

Thank you. (APPLAUSE)

AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE:

20:21:16;24

What the United States can do at a minimum is to shine the spotlight, and raise the priority of this and-- as the most egregious current human rights issue in China, but not by f-- by no means the only one. Human rights, religious freedom, democracy have fallen out of our lexicon when it comes to China and, frankly, many other parts of the world.

20:21:42;07

And while I think realistically speaking this is not a case where the United States has a practical option of, for example, a humanitarian intervention (NOISE)-- we can, and I believe should, be speaking out forcefully and clearly about our concerns with respect to the Uighur situation, with respect to Hong Kong. And right now we're silent. And worse, the president of the United States reportedly said in a phone call, in effect, to Xinjiang Ping, I think in June, that, you know, we're gonna stay silent on these issues

in service of a larger agenda.

20:22:22;11

I-- I think we need to get back to the time which, frankly, we experienced under previous administrations, Democratic and Republican, where issues of democracy, human rights-- religious freedom were essential components of our engagement with China, and our-- and often a source of bilateral friction with China. We were not unwilling to stand up for the values that we hold.

20:22:50;24

And I worry that we have lost that. And I recognize that that is not in a proximate sense going to protect your family. And I'm very sorry for the extraordinary suffering that-- that they and so many others are enduring. But at least we would be consistent with our values, and-- and our interests in the protection of human rights and of innocent civilians.

20:23:18;06

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

FEMALE VOICE (UNIDENTIFIED):

20:23:39;21

Hi. My name is Serena (PH). I'm a student at the George Washington University. I'd like to thank both of you so much for being here today. And my question is concerning something that General Petraeus mentioned, the prospect of a technological new cold war-- concerning America's relationship with Russia and China.

20:23:54;18

Do you think that U.S. Cyber Command specifically is equipped to handle the growing informational capabilities of both these states, especially considering that both of the cyber apparatuses of China and Russia intersect heavily with other arms of their state apparatus, and also that it's been enumerated in both of their cyber strategies that part of their strategies intrinsically has-- had the goal of harming American institutions in some cases?

CRAIG MELVIN:

20:24:24;11

General?

GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS:

20:24:25;01

Let me-- start just by, I guess, if I could give the intellectual context-- for the question that you've asked. Because I think one of the challenges with developments in cyberspace-- is that they have been so rapid-- and so innovative, sometimes diabolically clever, as in criminal activity in cyberspace, or, indeed, interference in our elections, or a variety of activities-- that we have actually had a hard time intellectually keeping up with them, and the implications of them.

20:25:04;06

And the-- the result of that is that a least common denominator cyber law-- called the Rogers-Ruppersberger Bill for when Mike Rogers was the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee and Representative Ruppersberger was the ranking member w-- back when I was the CIA director. Even that couldn't get through congress. There just wasn't the recognition of the imperative.

20:25:27;23

And so the ultimate organizational capability that we truly needed, which is now called the Center for the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency within DHS, which should've been created ten years ago, frankly-- is just being established. The law was passed last fall. Cyber Command should've been elevated to a fully fledged combatant command status back when I was still in uniform. And I-- and-- it was a puzzle to me always as to why that did not happen.

(NOISE)

20:26:01;24

The element at DNI that is a cyber-- element, and is-- is trying to do for cyber what the National Counterterrorism Center does for-- terrorism, pushing back and forth between the intelligence community, and law enforcement, and observing our laws as we do it, all of these entities-- are very late to the game. And the real problem is, again, that we haven't-- not only have we been shooting behind the target-- it looks as if we're-- we're falling behind in that regard.

20:26:33;03

I'm very, very worried. Again, cyberspace is an entire new domain of warfare alongside land, sea, air, subsea, and space. And it is-- war is going on in it on a daily basis-- at very high frequency. And I think we have to work very hard to try to catch up-- first with the legislation that provides authorities, and then supported by appropriations to build the-- organizational capabilities, and the organizational architecture, and then develops the policies-- and the regulations, and the processes.

20:27:14;02

But we are not-- not keeping up in that regard. And I'm very concerned about it. The fact that congress has still not passed-- appropriations for elections security. Now CISA is work-- working hard on this. I know the director of it quite well. Director Krebs is very impressive. But they d-- and he's moving out on this issue regardless with what it is that the resources they can bring to bear.

20:27:41;20

But this is an issue, again, that has gotten trapped in politics rather than in the common ground that clearly should exist, that no one-- we should not allow-- outside entities to intrude in our elections. So I think you've raised a very, very significant issue. And I've been concerned for years, again, as I mentioned. As the four star combatant commander of Central Command, I urged that Cyber Command be elevated, pushed very hard for-- publically for what is now called CISA.

20:28:13;09

And so we've gotta get a move on, on this stuff. And, by the way, there are a number of other issues in which the-- the awareness or the knowledge in congress does not seem to be-- commensurate to the task, as we saw, I think most prominently, in those hearings that featured the Facebook-- founder and CEO, Mark Zuckerberg.

CRAIG MELVIN:

20:28:35;11

Don't attack the messenger here, but we-- we have

time for one more question, I believe. Two-- two more questions. Okay.

FEMALE VOICE (UNIDENTIFIED):

20:28:42;18

Hi. Thank you all for coming.

GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS:

20:28:44;12

Can't-- can't hear you.

FEMALE VOICE (UNIDENTIFIED):

20:28:47;24

Am I too short? (LAUGH) Hi. I had a question-- I wanted to thank you both for coming, but I actually had a question for-- Ambassador Rice, regarding your comment about creating a national service. As you probably already know, Eritrea has a national service. And they have received ridicule among the international community over having it, because of, I guess, certain issues depending on who you talk to.

20:29:11;16

Are you afraid the unite-- if the United States were to establish a national service similar to the-- or as you-- in your com-- as you said in your comments, that the United States might receive some backlash in-- in the-- I guess in

the global north regarding that issue?

AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE:

20:29:28;00

No. And let me explain why. First of all, probably many of you don't know about Eritrea's circumstances. They've had mandatory military service, and conscripted people for a war that began in 1998, and have not let people out of conscription camps. They are still being, in effect, held as hostages.

20:29:52;16

So that's not what I'm talking about. (LAUGH)
What I'm talking about is a system that would-- enable young people in this country, for six to 12 months-- to serve. Think of it more like-- you know, service in-- you know, during the-- the depression and work progress administration. You know, these are-- these are-- but they would be things that-- that people were asked and expected to do.

CRAIG MELVIN:

20:30:25;24

Similar to AmeriCorps or the Peace Corps.

AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE:

20:30:28;08

Yeah. But-- but-- but domestically. And the-- the-- the reason why I say it ought to be mandatory is because what we often have, we have a lotta people who sign up for AmeriCorps or, you know-- sign up for the Peace Corps. But it-- it tends to be those can afford to do so, those who come from elite backgrounds.

20:30:52;23

And it tends to be that we are still as stratified and socioeconomically segregated as ever. And I recognize that what I'm suggesting is expensive. I recognize that what I'm suggesting-- has-- an element of compulsion to it that is-- you know, that most Americans, myself included, would normally react against.

20:31:22;11

But what I'm saying is we are in a moment where this is a matter, in my judgement, of, you know, the strength, and the cohesion, and the viability of our democracy itself, and our unity itself. Now we've been through periods in the past-- of

extraordinary national division, obviously the Civil War and Reconstruction, two world wars and McCarthyism, Vietnam and the Civil Rights Era where students were being shot on campuses and our cities were burning down.

20:31:52;24

And we've come through each of those challenges, arguably whole, and even stronger. So we have the capacity to address this challenge. These divisions are of our own making. Therefore we have the capacity to address them. But I do believe that if we stay on the course we're on, and not contemplate pretty bold initiatives and solutions to address it, then we're gonna be drifting in a very negative and dangerous direction.

20:32:22;13

So I'm putting that out there. I recognize that it's, you know, a bold thought. It is not to be equated with, you know, 20 year mandatory (LAUGH) conscription. But it is to be something to provoke thought, and-- and cause us to ask

ourselves, you know, what are we prepared to do--
to unify, to see that we have more that-- that--
in common that-- more that we share than that
which divides us. Because if we stay on
autopilot, I don't think it's gonna end well.

FEMALE VOICE (UNIDENTIFIED):

20:32:59;22

I asked that because in Eritrea there's something
called SAWA. Sorry.

CRAIG MELVIN:

20:33:02;24

Well, I'm sorry. We're-- we're-- we just don't
have time for a follow up.

FEMALE VOICE (UNIDENTIFIED):

20:33:05;24

Okay. I was just gonna say, because SAWA's the
same thing where they ice-- they bring the 18
year olds in their last year of high school
together. So that sounded very similar when you
were describing it. Sorry.

CRAIG MELVIN:

20:33:14;05

Got it. Sir, we'll-- we'll-- we'll turn to you.
And this-- this will have to be our-- our last
question.

MALE VOICE (UNIDENTIFIED):

20:33:19;08 Thank you. Thank you. Good evening. I speculate that many of us are trying to gain some perspective on what is happening in Hong Kong currently. And-- I think the indicators have been there for some time that the autonomy that they were promised is eroding, and it's now reached-- a tipping point, I would say. So I'm-- I'm also curious to know, you know, what's your thoughts on what's at stake-- and how U.S. and other democracies-- whether they should try to influence it, and what levers they have to influence what's going on there?

AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE:

20:34:00;08 You want me to go? (LAUGHTER)

GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS:

20:34:03;12 You were the Ambassador.

AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE:

20:34:03;20 This is my c-- this is my common ground right here.

GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS:

20:34:05;01 This is-- no, I-- I occasionally go on with

Secretary Gates, or someone like that. And it's wonderful to be a former soldier when you have a policymaker with you. (LAUGHTER) I love to say, "This is a policy issue."

AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE:

20:34:16;11

They're all policy issues. (LAUGHTER) But I'm happy to-- to charge into the abyss. I think that in it-- my answer is not dissimilar to the-- to the one I gave with respect to the Uighur challenge. China is clearly violating-- the-- the terms of the agreement that was struck. And the, you know, the-- the-- not respecting the two systems aspect of that agreement.

20:34:45;17

They're a creeping-- repression. And there's a real risk, I fear, that-- this could devolve into something that-- resembles a second Tiananmen. And I think it's incumbent on the United States, on dem-- democratic nations, on those that have an economic stake in Hong Kong-- and basically all nations of values to stand up and be very clear and-- forceful in condemning state

sponsored violence, particularly state sponsored violence that is-- used to address the peaceful exercise of civil liberties.

20:35:31;18

Now the problem is there are some within the-- the-- protest movement that have resorted to violence. But the vast majority of the students, and the elderly, and the mothers, and the fathers who are out there with strollers every weekend, asking for their rights to be respected are not employing violence. They're just expressing their right to free speech, and their aspirations for-- Hong Kong.

20:36:00;22

And, you know, again, the United States' silence and-- reluctance to speak with clarity, and to, you know, insist on the adherence to universal norms and values is deeply disturbing to me. And I think it is serving to-- to quite dramatically erode our leadership.

CRAIG MELVIN:

20:36:23;13

This has been-- an enlightening conversation.

I've so enjoyed it. I hope both of you have as well. And I certainly hope that-- that you have. I-- I also hope that it lived up to the-- to the common ground-- theme, bringing light and not heat to public discourse. So-- thank you both. And-- and I wanna bring back Bruce Bond-- there's Bruce, Bruce, of course, again, the CEO of the Common Ground Committee, for a few final thoughts. Bruce?

BRUCE BOND:

20:36:49;14

Well, thank you Craig. Thank you all. Thank you, Ambassador Rice (INAUDIBLE) (APPLAUSE). (INAUDIBLE) as she said to our motto--

20:37:03;09

(OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

BRUCE BOND:

20:37:06;09

--our motto of bringing light not heat to public discourse. And we hope tonight you take away the-- and-- and, indeed, imbibe the spirit of what you heard tonight in your own public discourse. We heard very eloquently from Ambassador Rice about the importance of bridging our divides. (NOISE)

20:37:22;24

And we believe that that really starts in your own experiences with your colleagues, your friends, and your families. And speaking of families, I want to alert you all that we do have a webinar coming up Thursday night at 7:00 P.M. It's targeted to students that are going home for the holidays (LAUGHTER), maybe a little nervous about what's gonna happen at the family table.

20:37:43;24

It's called-- Ten Ways to Heal the Divide and Talk Politics This Thanksgiving. And we encourage you to register. (LAUGHTER) It's in your-- the registration information is in your-- program. Also we have a big surprise for you. Everybody in the room tonight gets a free copy of Ambassador Rice's book.

CRAIG MELVIN:

20:38:05;10

Oh.

GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS:

20:38:05;24

Wow. (APPLAUSE) Bravo.

AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE:

20:38:11;00 Thank you very much. Thank you.

BRUCE BOND:

20:38:12;16 You're welcome. It's our pleasure. So when you
leave tonight--

GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS:

20:38:15;08 It-- it just-- it just jumped to number five.

BRUCE BOND:

20:38:16;13 --you'll find that they're our there on the
tables. Please take a book.

AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE:

20:38:19;13 I don't think so.

BRUCE BOND:

20:38:20;05 We encourage you to read it. It's a wonderful
work. And I'm sure you're going to enjoy it.

AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE:

20:38:25;21 I actually like (INAUDIBLE).

BRUCE BOND:

20:38:26;07 And so with that, Craig, thank you so much for
being such a great monitor.

AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE:

20:38:30;21 Thank you, Craig.

BRUCE BOND:

20:38:31;05 Moderator. (APPLAUSE)

GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS:

20:38:31;08 Thank you.

CRAIG MELVIN:

20:38:32;01 Thank you both. Thank you.

AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE:

20:38:33;08 Thank you.

BRUCE BOND:

20:38:35;22 General Petraeus and Ambassador Rice, you have enlightened us. Thank you so much.

GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS:

20:38:38;19 Thank you. Let me jump down here and just say, "Hi," to Mike.

BRUCE BOND:

20:38:40;10 Thank you all for coming this evening.

AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE:

20:38:41;16 Oh, you beat me to that.

BRUCE BOND:

20:38:42;23 How are you?

20:38:43;15 (OFF-MIC CONVERSATION)

20:38:49;20 (MUSIC NOT TRANSCRIBED)

* * *END OF TRANSCRIPT* * *