

Mike Pompeo, Former US Secretary of State & CIA Director, on Geopolitics, Leadership, and the Economy

Jen Prosek

This month, Money Maze Podcast host Simon Brewer has handed over the reins to me. I'm Jen Prosek, Founder and Managing Partner of Prosek Partners. After being featured on the show, I'm delighted to be the guest host of this series recorded from our Madison Avenue office in New York. We are now joined by the 70th Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, who served as Secretary of State under President Trump and also served as President Trump's CIA Director. Before that, he was elected to four terms in Congress representing Kansas. He is an entrepreneur, he is a best-selling author, and we're going to learn a lot today about Mike Pompeo and his views. So welcome, Mike.

Mike Pompeo

It's great to be with you, Jennifer. Thanks for having me on. It's great that I can be here in my shirt sleeves and we can get after it and get to work!

Jen Prosek

Yes, we're thrilled to have you. So you look relaxed, which is great. So you are the only person, if I am right, to have served as CIA Director and Secretary of State, which is quite an undertaking, especially in a pretty tumultuous four years. Tell us what led up to that. What do you think about you, made you able to get both of those positions and keep both of those positions?

Mike Pompeo

That's a good question. My critics would say there's no explanation. It had to be a mistake. The truth is, if you look at the things that I've done in my life, in some ways, they built to the moment which gave me the opportunity. It's like lots of things in life. I think you stumble into opportunities, but lots of the work that was put in before put you in a place where it was possible. I think that's true here. As for the actual process, I had never met Donald Trump in my life. I had campaigned for Senator Marco Rubio with great energy and vigor, although radically unsuccessfully, and then had gotten reelected to my fourth term in Congress November of 2016, the presidential election the same day I was reelected, and I get a call just a few days later from Vice President Elect

Pence who asked me if I would consider joining the administration, just out of nowhere. I reminded him that I'd worked very hard against President Trump in the primary, and he said, 'No problem.' And four days later, I was the nominee to be the CIA director. It was crazy and wonderful and an incredible privilege to serve America in those two roles. You asked, how did you sort of make it, the same way I've tried to do everything. You always know there's so much that you don't know. You're always deeply aware of the fact that it is a big, complicated world, but what you can do is build a team and work hard. And so my very first mission, even before I was confirmed as CIA director, I began immediately to think, who do I know? How am I going to build this out? How do I bring a team around with the skill set that will help me be successful on behalf of President Trump and America? So I was getting ready for my confirmation but I spent most of that time doing organisational work. You know how this goes. You run a big company. How do you put together the right human beings that will have sufficient talent, sufficient energy, sufficient commitment to the mission? I had a very deep mission, and would be focused on it, call it loyalty, call it what you will, but understood what we were trying to do. And then trying to get to know my new boss, and to make sure they understood what his expectations were for me as well. I think that work that we did in those intervening days gave me the space to be successful. And you're right, there weren't many who survived four years in senior posts in the Trump administration, and I was blessed enough to do that.

Jen Prosek

Well, I think you were more than blessed. We're going to find out what it is about you that allowed that. But now that you've had a little time to reflect, what are you most proud of in those four years?

Mike Pompeo

I spent a lot of time thinking about the things I wish we had done better, less time focused on the things I think we did pretty well. If you start at the things that I think will change history, I think the signature thing we achieved was a set of understandings in the Middle East that mean it's less likely that your kids or my kids will ever have to go fight and die there and Israel will be safer, Middle Eastern countries, and most importantly, America will be, and then there'll be a huge commercial component to this as well, which in the end, really does drive international relations. That brings me to the second thing that I'm really proud of. We understood, I think because so many of us had come from business, Steven Mnuchin, Donald Trump himself, Wilbur Ross at Commerce, so many of us spent most of our adult lives in capital markets, taking risks and getting our heads kicked in, competing, many of us in global commercial enterprises. We knew the power of the American economy. And so as we thought about foreign policy, we often put economics at the front and center of it. I'm

really proud of the fact that I think we connected America in places around the world as an economic engine in ways that will deliver really good security forces. Well, you can't disconnect security from the economy. The threat from the Chinese Communist Party is centrally an economic threat today. So to the extent we got that piece right and put America on a sounder economic footing around the world, I hope that will help not only the businesses be successful, but will reduce risk so our military doesn't have to go do hard stuff in really difficult places.

Jen Prosek

The difficult places, we are getting right into it, China, Russia, and keeping us safer and our economy strong. Talk to us, you spent so much time. You know China and Russia and their leadership better than anyone I know. Tell us what we're facing in those two areas, starting with China.

Mike Pompeo

Jennifer, there are deeper experts on this subject than me. But there's no one who's spent as much time with these cast of characters as I did for four years. I'm sure the current Secretary of State and CIA Director are doing the same today. So Russia is the immediate challenge because they chose to go invade a sovereign nation. Bad for the world. It's really bad for the United States. I know many in my party think we shouldn't be supporting Ukraine. I hardly use that term. No, you should be keeping America safe and an element of keeping America safe was making sure Vladimir Putin doesn't sit on the seat of power in Kyiv, or worse yet, in Helsinki or Stockholm. His mission set wasn't just retake what he would view as the near abroad, it was a deep play for political control in the Baltic states, in addition to Ukraine. So we should get that right. We should provide the Ukrainians the things they need to fight and win. They haven't asked for our boys and girls, they've just asked for stuff at this point, and we should provide them stuff because we can and we're really good at making stuff that can help a nation like them do the things they need to do. But in the end, Russia has a thousand nuclear warheads, a very capable, powerful leader. I've been criticized for saying that. Putin screwed up. He made a strategic blunder, there's no doubt about that. But don't underestimate. Don't think for a moment this is over or is going to be over or that the Russians are intent on capitulating. I don't think that for a moment. It takes continued resolve and strength, and there's only one way to deter these guys and it is with power. That brings me to the nexus between Russia and China today. So it's always been there, always been complicated, I think probably forever shall be. But if you looked at the things that can change how our kids and grandkids will live, it's not Russia, it is China. In fact, it is the Chinese Communist Party, and even more precisely, it is Xi Jinping. So we all need to just figure out, and this is complicated. How do you achieve what Reagan achieved with the Soviet Union, which is to

convince the people in those places and the leaders in those places to begin to behave in ways that are more fundamentally decent and certainly less prone to kinetic conflict? How do you do that with the deep economic ties that we have between not only the United States and China, but Germany sitting in the United Kingdom, huge export partners, and frankly, import customers for the Chinese Communist Party? So we have to think our way through about how we do that. Maybe this brings me back to question one. Of the things I'm most proud of, it was redirecting American foreign policy to acknowledge the central threat to our way of life from the Chinese Communist Party under Xi's leadership. And it was just the first part of a 12-step program, right? The first step is always I have a problem. We got to step one, we acknowledge the problem, which for 40 years, we had ignored or turned the other cheek, and then we didn't get much further. Much work remains.

Jen Prosek

What can we expect do you think in the Russian-Ukraine conflict? What did the situation with the attempts, what did that mean or did it not mean anything?

Mike Pompeo

Jennifer, the truth is, I've heard all the so-called experts say they know what that means. I always was so cautious that as outsiders we could ever understand what's really going on inside of Russian leadership. I always was very humble about the scope and the depth and clarity of do we really know what Prigozhin was up to. Do we really know the second in command, this guy named Patrushev, who I met, a bad guy? Do we really know what he is plotting and planning? I don't know that we actually do. Maybe our intelligence services have a better read. We can say this for sure. We can say this was an embarrassment for Putin, no matter how it went. That will mean that he will have to take even stricter actions inside of his own country to prevent something like this from happening again. A second affront to his power in this way would diminish him even more than this one did. But we should also acknowledge he's almost certainly still largely in control, but that that control could snap. In economics, they talk about this as stochastic or disruptive or black swan. Most times leaders bail like Putin isn't because oh, we could see the trajectory and it was a pretty clear glide path, you wake up one morning and the world broke. That's the most likely way this will happen as well. Our interests haven't changed no matter what Prigozhin did or intended to do. Our interests remain in protecting the things that matter to America, providing Europe and Ukraine the things they need to push back against this assault on basic property rights, basic understandings of trade. And we should never forget, we signed a piece of paper in 1994 that promised if this happened, we'd help them. It's called the Budapest Memorandum. It's seldom seen or talked about. I wish the Biden administration would talk about it. But we promised them, and our British friends, our German friends,

our Japanese friends, our Taiwanese friends, our South Korean friends, our Philippine friends, all are watching like, really, do you mean it America when you say you're going to do something? When the moment occurs and it's hard, will you actually do that? And so we should if we're serious about deterrence, which is the model for China. The model for China has to be the Reagan model of deterrence. And frankly, the Trump model, what we were pretty successful at is a model that doesn't permit the perception of weakness to creep into the bad guy's minds. And if you can do that, if you can keep that perception at bay, you should, and continuing to help the Ukrainians is a fundamental piece of that, especially in the aftermath of Afghanistan where the whole world could see, oh, my goodness, this isn't the America I used to be friends with and rely upon, or frankly if you're an adversary, this isn't the America I used to fear.

Jen Prosek

I love that reminder of keeping our promises as Americans. I think that's incredibly important.

Jen Prosek

Just one more minute on the deterrence model. You spend time in your book 'Never Give an Inch', your bestseller, on the deterrence model. You don't go so far to say that you deterred Vladimir Putin and the Trump administration, but you have some pride about keeping him at bay during that time. What do you think you did that was effective?

Mike Pompeo

It's such a great question, Jennifer, because it all seems like so long ago. But remember, for the first two and a half years, we were all viewed as Russian assets by the American mainstream media. My president gets impeached because of a phone call with Mr. Zelensky, who's now running a great operation in Ukraine. These things all come back. These are deeply connected. Yeah, I'm not so sure I take pride in it, but I do explain I think the Russians knew that we were either crazy or really good or serious about enforcing the things we said we'd do. I'm agnostic as to which it is. I think I know, but others would deny it. Here's what I can prove. He didn't take any Ukraine on our watch. This actually begins in 2014 with Vladimir Putin taking Crimea, so about 25% of real estate. For four years, he doesn't take any more. We didn't get Crimea back, that's true. But then we're gone for a few months and he becomes adventuresome, aggressive again, killing more Ukrainians again. The progressive left would tell you we were just lucky. I would argue that the conversations I had with Bortnikov and Naryshkin, the leaders of their intelligence services, the conversations that were had with Lavrov and that the National Security Adviser had with Patrushev, we didn't claim we were going to do all things always but we said, here's a

few things you can't do, and if you do them, this will end badly. And when they did them, it ended badly. I think Putin came to respect that, and I think most importantly, his desire, which has been unabated and probably will always remain so, his desire to create greater Russia, it wasn't the moment, it wasn't the time. And so if you said, what did we do, we just reminded him that these things can be costly and so don't do it. And he didn't. You can say whatever you want but it didn't take long before that model was abandoned by a president who said a minor incursion might be okay. Could have been a slip up, could have been a guff, but the President of the United States said those words, and man, bad things followed, especially bad things for the Ukrainian people.

Jen Prosek

So apply that deterrence model to the Chinese situation. What would you recommend at this point?

Mike Pompeo

Oh, my goodness. This is a very long answer because it's multifaceted. So I'll start with the place that we all need to focus on, and that is economic. The central thesis of the Chinese Communist Party has been hide your strength and bide your time for 25 years. Xi now thinks I did that. I grew my economy. I'm now the largest economy in the world, or maybe the second largest economy in the world. I still don't have the technological breadth and depth of the West, but I'm pretty good. And I probably still need to steal stuff, but not quite as much. And so you can see his increasing aggressiveness economically. Well, how does that manifest itself? It manifests itself by sucking in some American businesses and making friends with them, places he still needs technology know-how, management expertise, places where he realizes he can gain leverage on American policy. Second, he begins to make friends around the world. The Belt and Road Initiative would be one piece of that where he builds out infrastructure in exchange for political favours, or just more crudely, puts money in brown paper bags and buys leaders in countries around the world. We don't play that game, we shouldn't play that game, but he does and it works in certain places. So building up political influence around the world and then continuing to expand his own military capabilities. And so you've got to confront him in each of those. Economically, this looks pretty straightforward with a central thesis of reciprocity. You want to buy land, you the Chinese Communist Party want to buy land in the United States. Sounds good. We're an open economy, knock yourself out. We want to buy land near your military bases in China. Oh, we can't. All right, well, you can't buy them here either. We should begin to enforce in the Chinese mind that it's not a one-way racket. They can't have all the things that benefit them without opening up their economy as well. If we did that, if we adopt this reciprocity, think about how we file on our various stock exchanges and think about our regulatory set of rules, if you want in the Biden administration, how about this or reciprocity, if we're going to shut down our coal-fired

power plants, so are you. And if you don't, which of course they never will, then we're going to impose real costs on you. It's not the place I'd pick. I wouldn't pick climate change as the place to plant my flag, but the Biden administration has. And so at the very least, if you're going to burden the American economy and destroy large sectors here, you should make sure that the other guys aren't putting more carbon into the air undermining the very policy goal that you state that you have. So economically, it's about reciprocity. Second, it's about friend-building. I just got back yesterday from Tokyo. The Biden administration, I'll give them credit, they had Prime Minister Modi in town, they had the president of South Korea to come visit for a State dinner. Those are powerful allies and friends in the region and they need to be part of the American economic complex and the American understanding of how nations engage. India, Australia, South Korea, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, these are big economies and when we get those economies all working together, I think the leadership in China will have to confront an enormous challenge and I hope that will cause them to conform and behave. This is probably worth a last note. When we do those things, my hope isn't that this will cause Xi Jinping to go to war. It's in fact just the opposite, and maybe Xi Jinping can't do this, but others can. I think they'll come to see it's not in the Chinese government and the Chinese people and the Communist Party's best interest to be so confrontational. My goal isn't to destroy the Chinese economy and take down the economic growth that you've had hundreds of millions of people experience over the last 25 years. It's just the opposite. I want good things for the Chinese people as well, but you can't do that on the back of Americans. So we all have to be prepared to help countries in the region as a superior security matter, but most importantly, as an economic matter.

Jen Prosek

You wrote a bestseller called 'Never Give an Inch', so this is a good opportunity to talk about that. I think sometimes people misunderstand the title of your book to mean that you don't compromise, but I've come to learn that that's not actually the case. Tell us a little bit about how we should think about your never given an inch philosophy, then I'm going to ask you a couple of my favourite highlights from the book.

Mike Pompeo

Oh, my gosh, so the title was just fun.

Jen Prosek

Didn't your son come up with it or something?

Mike Pompeo

It was fun because it's something I told my son as he was growing up and he reminded me and he said that's what you should lead with. But within the first 20 pages, you can find me working out arrangements, compromises. This is how we do business. I spent most of my life in the private sector, very seldom got everything I wanted. I always had to find a way to create value, make situations where everybody was at least at the margin better off and perceived it as so. There are places where you do have to draw lines and that's what 'Never Give and Inch' attempts to delineate. I talk about risk an awful lot in the book. Jennifer, you know this, right? You run a big company and you're helping lots of clients think about how to manage risk. And so this was the mission set. To manage risk appropriately, there are just things you have to tell folks. Hey, this is just a line, we're not going to pass this. You can rail on it, you can go out to the press and tell them what I said. But when it comes to basic, fundamental understandings of human rights, yeah, these things matter to us. When it comes to sovereignty, no, we're going to get it right. We're going to get our border right, we hope you'll get your order right. Because these nation states, the central thesis of the post World War Two order of the nation state as the central actor on the global stage it turns out made people a lot of money. And when I say that, GDP per capita has never been higher in the history of civilisation. We live with the most glorious time, the most glorious time in human history. It's easy to get mired in the negative but we're all pretty damn lucky. Certainly here in America, we're really blessed. And so we should never forget that that means there's just things you have to say no, I'm not going there, we're not going to touch that. But on how many parts per million of sulfur are we going to spend \$82 million or \$92 million on a project in Papa New Guinea, you can argue about those till the cats come home and happy to compromise, happy to give a whole handful of inches if it accomplishes an American objective.

Jen Prosek

I will say I think your book is really riveting and very honest. You talked about keeping promises and you're a man of faith. I thought one of the most interesting stories you tell in the book is about that speech you made in Cairo and the decisions you had to make around that which I thought were pretty brave and against counsel, by the way. Could you tell the listeners just a little bit about that one anecdote? There's so many, but it's one of my favourites.

Mike Pompeo

It's a good story. You'll appreciate this too, Jennifer. The best compliment in my book came from a couple of my really close friends of some 40 years who read it and said, 'Dude, that sounds like you.' As good as it gets. The story was, I'm an evangelical Christian, but I was America's Secretary of State, not the Presbyterian Church's

Secretary of State or the Southern Baptist Convention Secretary of State. I was America's Secretary of State. But nonetheless, it was important always to be open with people about how I thought about problems, how I approached the world, how I thought about them as human beings endowed by their Creator. So I was heading to Cairo to give a speech that I had wanted to give all my life but never thought I'd get a chance. I say all my life, I'd wanted to give this speech for 10 years. It was in response to something President Obama had said. President Obama had gone to Cairo and given this speech which essentially described America's place in the Middle East as being the problem. And I was convinced and remained convinced that while we may have caused problems in the Middle East, probably undoubtedly true, we're a force for good. We were trying to get it right for them. We weren't trying to take over a country, we were just trying to make things better for them. It was always from a noble place, and President Obama just had rejected that. So I went to go to Cairo to give the counter speech, the counter-narrative about American greatness and how we were there to try and figure out good solutions that fit with their country's governance models and their challenges. I thought, well, I'll start the speech by just saying I'm Mike Pompeo, an evangelical Christian. As I usually did, I drafted an outline in the first paragraph and the last paragraph. So that's what I wrote and sent it down to the speech team, and it came back with that line erased, gone. Good thing they blacklined it so I didn't forget, I could see that I had written it. Eventually, we went back and forth and I left it in, Jennifer, in the end. It turns out, I still get comments just like your question this morning. I get more comments about that than just about anything else I ever said a lot of times from faithful Islamic leaders who will say, you know, we loved that because I get it, we're both Abrahamic faiths but very different in many theological perspectives, but you were just honest about who you were. You were straight up and you were committed and disciplined and we love commitment, discipline and honesty. So I get that all the time and I think all of us should remember that in every place that we go. When you in get hard deals and you get in the hard places, it's easy just to gild the lily around the edge often just to go, yeah, here's what I'm thinking, here's what I believe, and here's why I believe it and have a real discussion instead of trying to hide things and work around things that really sit at the substrate of who we are. If you do that and do that well, there's days it probably causes more problems than it should. But I think in the end, we're all better off when we do that. And it was lovely and wonderful and I still welcome these letters and comments I get from people and I stack them in the boxes in my office here.

Jen Prosek

Well, we both know, sometimes when you take a calculated risk against counsel and it works out, you get the greatest achievement of all, but authenticity matters. I asked you in the beginning how the heck did you become the CIA Director and the Secretary of State, but I kind of know the answer. Hard work. I mean, you were number

one in your class at West Point. You were at Harvard Law School. You've started two businesses. You were a congressman. There's really nothing you haven't done. But people may not necessarily understand your business and entrepreneurial career, which I find very fascinating. Can you tell us a little bit about the business? As you've said to come from business, but I'm not sure everyone knows that. Tell us a little bit about the businesses you started and the experience there.

Mike Pompeo

Sure. So I was practicing law in Washington, DC, having a fine time around really smart people, but knew I didn't want to do that the rest of my life. And then this amazing opportunity to start a company with three of my best friends from West Point. Turned out as it worked out, it was in Wichita, Kansas, a place that I had known well because my mother grew up not far from there, but pure coincidence that we ended back in that place. And it was a machine shop basically. We had lathes and mills and programmers and we made airplane parts for Gulfstream and Lockheed and Cessna and Learjet and the like, airframe components, mostly metal stuff, welding, riveting simple things, and it was awesome. There's nothing like the smell of burnt grease on a manufacturing floor to make me happy, hardworking people as part of my team. Great. So we built that, we did a handful of acquisitions. We got slammed at 9/11 when we really had some, and I talk about this in the book, we really had some bad days, difficult, difficult days, but ran that for six, seven years, and then got hired to run a second company kind of in the same space, hard metal goods, oil and gas industry. So the customers were the midstream and downstream guys in Midland-Odessa and Calgary, Canada. A wonderful, fun business. We had a big drilling rig repair, equipment repair shop in Midland-Odessa. It was great, and that's what I did. The good news is I'm now back doing the same thing, not quite as directly in terms of manufacturing, but now back in the commercial space trying to build out an investment advisory business.

Jen Prosek

Tell us what you're doing.

Mike Pompeo

We're working along with a couple of friends and partners to build a firm that's an investment advisory firm. We've raised some capital, so we have a fund as well. But we're focused on doing industrial hard tech projects, and almost all of the things that we have worked on to date have turned out to have a geopolitical component to them. So pretty natural that these are mostly American companies that we're working with, but we're trying to help them someplace in the world cut through some challenge and make good decisions about either how to

help a global 1000 company make an investment here in America or an American company figure out how to partner with someone not inside the United States as well. It is a ton of fun and we think it's going to be very successful. We're enjoying the heck out of it.

Jen Prosek

Now, you have to talk to the audience about your first job at Baskin-Robbins scooping ice cream, because it's a fun one, but it shows how much you learn from your first work experience. So tell us a little bit about that one. And then I'm going to have to ask you about the upcoming election and your points of view.

Mike Pompeo

Happy to take both. The Baskin-Robbins one, a much easier question. At 15, I think I was old enough to work. My sister was already there and so she dragged the family over to Baskin-Robbins. It's now in our blood. To your point, Jennifer, when a lot of folks listening to this have children or grandkids, every chance they get to work, whether it's on the family farm or in a small company, whatever it is, it creates structure and you learn how to be part of a team. And by the way, you learn you're not always in charge, which is maybe one of the most important lessons for leaders to appreciate, to understand what it means to be part of an organisation and to have things that you think, gosh, I can really do a lot better than mopping the floor at Baskin-Robbins at midnight on a Saturday night. But the truth is, it taught me a lot. The guy who owned this place was a fellow named Barry Takemoto. He was in Costa Mesa, California. I don't remember exactly where, I think it was on MacArthur Boulevard. Anyway, you can find it. I think it's still there. I'd work, everybody they'd say 'Hey, Mike, you know, you work from 2:00 to 8:00, I want to go to a movie. Will you take my 8:00 to midnight shift?' And I almost always said yes because A, I loved the money. \$275 an hour was big time. I loved it and it just felt good to put it in the bank. But it also taught me a lot. Barry would always remind me, he would come in from time to time to say, 'Did you make Baskin Robbins better today?' That was his go-to line. What did do you do to make this place better today? I hope we can all no matter where we sit in life, whether it's with our family or a coach on our kids soccer team or whatever it is, did you make it a little bit better today? Maybe not. Maybe today, you made it a little bit worse. But tomorrow, can you help it? Can you make it better? And I think that's what Barry Takemoto taught me most from that first job.

Jen Prosek

I love that story. So let's talk about the future of America. You are long on America. You said we're very happy to be Americans. I agree we're very lucky. Looking at an election coming up, what do you think are the most important issues to focus on? What do you hope the next administration will really focus on?

Mike Pompeo

Thanks for the chance to talk about this given that I made the decision not to run further proving my sanity, perhaps. I'm hopeful that it'll be about the big things, the things that really matter to every American. I'm a conservative Republican, I make no bones about that. I think our theory of the place and role of government is the right one. But I hope we'll have conversations about that and what that looks like in modern times, the times in which we exist. So I hope we'll have good discussions about what should we be teaching our kids in the schools? What's going to propel them to successful lives as they decide what success looks like for them? What are the things we could do to keep basic law and order in place? We forget, when you're the Secretary of State, you see this all the time, you see how few countries are as capable of protecting basic security for people and property rights, which are the two fundamental pillars. If you go back, we just had the Fourth of July, right? If you go back to the founding, when they talk about this, they talk about property. It's the central thing that lets someone like me get a step forward in the world, right? It's like, no, I made \$275 an hour, I put it in the bank and you know what, it's still there. If I leave it there, no government is going to come take that away from me or diminish it, or worse yet, allow inflation to make it worthless. We should talk about these things that really matter for social mobility in America, the chance for the next generation to live a life that's better than ours. I hope we'll stay away from the things that are like name calling and clever tweets. By the way, I'm sometimes guilty of it too. The folks that are watching or listening to this, sign me up, go find YouTube, you'll find my bad days. They're out there. They're recorded for all of time. But I hope most days, better angels grab us and get it right. I hope in this political season, that will happen as well. And I hope the media will take on their role in this. They have a responsibility to say no, no, no, no, no, I asked you substantively about x, tell us what you want to do to solve this problem. Not somebody did it worse or Sally did it different or Joe's overweight. Whatever. These things matter and I hope that the American people will reward candidates that do that. I would take a candidate that I disagree with a little bit but who was straight up like no, here's what I think, as opposed to someone who spent all their time looking backward and blaming somebody else for something. It's just not the American way. It's not in the best American tradition. I hope we can get there. I'm not optimistic that we will give them the current media environment. I'm going to push for it. I'm going to stay. I'm going to try and keep my voice in and I'm going to try and call out people who aren't doing that and reward those who are and say, oh, that was great. That was a very substantive response. I couldn't disagree more, or I actually agree with part of it.

But serious leaders have a responsibility to tell the American people why they want to be a school board member or why they want to be a district attorney or why they want to be congressman or senator or President of the United States, and I hope we can get to that model.

Jen Prosek

It sounds like you're still going to be a very big part of the conversation.

Mike Pompeo

I don't know. We'll see. I'm going to try and steer it towards substance and reason and away from noise and chaos.

Jen Prosek

That sounds good to me. So we have only a couple minutes left, but I want to ask you, if you had to do either job again, what's the cooler job? CIA director or Secretary of State?

Mike Pompeo

Oh, that's a laugh. Being a CIA Director is the coolest job that I can ever possibly imagine for just a whole host of reasons. Lovely, lovely American patriots doing really hard work in a clandestine space, in an incredibly difficult environment. Not quite like the movies would portray it every day, but boy, we ask these young women, these young men to do some really hard things. They're not political. Yes, sir. Roger. Got it. Got President Trump. Got President Obama. Got President Biden. We're on our mission, we know what we're doing, and that part was great. State Department, I loved trying to help solve very complex, big problems but I prefer the background, not the foreground. And so for that reason, the CIA was just- you asked which job was cooler, that's probably it.

Jen Prosek

And if someone was just going to read just one or two chapters from your book, what do you think the highlights are?

Mike Pompeo

Two places to go. One, read the opening statement that comes from a fellow American who was held hostage in North Korea. It's remarkable. It's a very short piece. It's a page and a half as translated. His English isn't fantastic. But he tells a story of an American that came to get him when he was held in these unbelievable conditions. And

he says, essentially, I don't think any other country would have taken as much risk to come save me and get me out of this terrible place. America is a wonderful, wonderful country. The chapter on the strike against Qasem Soleimani matters because it encapsulates risk-taking and deterrence in a way that I think is the highlight of the book in terms of modelling how we were about to lose deterrence against Iran and we figured out a theory without putting 20,000 of our soldiers at risk, without creating World War Three, how we can put them back to understanding America's place and not creating risk for us. And then the last chapter tries to take all of this and encapsulate how it is America ought to move forward, my theory of the case for another 250 years of American excellence. So those would be the three places if you're going to dip in, I'd suggest those.

Jen Prosek

That is wonderful. Is there anything else you want to tell this huge audience of professionals and investment professionals?

Mike Pompeo

Yeah, one last thought, Jennifer, and I mean this. I think I have a sense of who your audience is. I'm counting on you. I am counting on risk-takers, entrepreneurs, business leaders, to go out and crush it. And the government should do its part. We should stay out of your way. We should let you go do all the things you want to do. But know that American security depends on a powerful, creative, innovative, somedays crushing American economy. And it's the people, Jennifer, that you and I both know that are out there every day doing this with their own money on behalf of others with others' money, but they're out there trying to figure out how you can go innovate, create, compete in incredibly difficult complex economic and commercial spaces. When they do, when we get this right, when America gets this right, we will be safer, our kids will be safer and a poor person in Africa, in South Asia, or in the Middle East, they will be better off because of what you do every day out there taking risks. It's a straight line from my perspective. And so the solutions to America's problems aren't likely to come from Washington, DC. They are infinitely more likely to come from hundreds of thousands of people out there every day driving to take care of their families, their businesses, their communities, in ways that only Americans have really figured out. When we do that, and I'm convinced we will, we're going to get that next 250 years.

Jen Prosek

Well, I'm inspired, and I'm sure that just inspired a lot of people to keep at it. Thank you so much Secretary Mike Pompeo. You are an inspiration. Keep the faith and we'll be looking forward to seeing what you do in the next few years.

Mike Pompeo

Yes, ma'am. Thank you. You have a good day too.

Jen Prosek

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