

Demetri Kofinas: 00:00 Today's episode of Hidden Forces is made possible by listeners like you. For more information about this week's episode or for easy access to related programming, visit our website at hiddenforces.io, and subscribe to our free email list. If you listen to the show on your Apple Podcast app, remember you can give us a review. Each review helps more people find the show and join our amazing community. And with that, please enjoy this week's episode.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:48 What's up, everybody. My guest on this episode of Hidden Forces is yet another important figure in the field of foreign affairs who we're fortunate enough to welcome to this program. Joseph Nye is the cofounder of the international relations theory of neoliberalism, and he's credited with developing the concept of soft power in the late 1980s. He served under several presidents, including Jimmy Carter, as an Under Secretary of State, where he also chaired the National Security Council group on non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and also served under the Bill Clinton administration as an Assistant Secretary of Defense.

Demetri Kofinas: 01:25 He's the former Dean of the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, and until very recently, the Chairman of North America for the Trilateral Commission. He serves currently as the Co-Chair of the Aspen Strategy Group and is a board member of the Atlantic Council, the Council on Foreign Relations, and the Center for Strategic and International Studies. I feel very lucky to have a chance to pick his brain for the next two hours. Professor Nye, welcome to Hidden Forces.

Joseph Nye: 01:54 It's nice to be with you.

Demetri Kofinas: 01:56 We did it. We made it. [laughter] It's been quite an adventure for the two of us on the audio front. It's one of the challenges of doing these things remotely, but you're a trooper. I appreciate you working with me to get it resolved.

Joseph Nye: 02:08 Well, I'm learning.

Demetri Kofinas: 02:10 How many interviews have you done since the book published?

Joseph Nye: 02:14 I've given probably three or four interviews for podcasts and probably about a dozen or two dozen speeches. I did a speech in LSE in London last week about the book with about 550 people. Did it via Zoom, but the technology's a lot simpler.

Demetri Kofinas: 02:36 Yeah. There are a few different ways of doing it. Using Zen Castro is something ... it has its own advantages. Anyway, let's get right into this. I was telling you how much I enjoyed your latest book, "Do Morals Matter?" Is the title of the book. I've read many books on foreign policy and political science. I majored in it in college and my focus was on foreign policy and foreign affairs. This is a great book. I would say it's a book that, first and foremost, is really great and I think ideal for people who are just getting into this, into foreign policy and certainly into a history of all these different presidents since FDR. But I think also for anyone that's actually ... let's say even someone like me who's majored in it. The focus on the moral dimensions was very interesting and it taught me a lot and it helped me to think about things, and that's one of the things I'm most excited to speak to you about. But what led you to write this book?

- Joseph Nye:** 03:31 Well, I've long been interested in moral questions. I studied philosophy politics and economics as a student at Oxford many, many years ago, and moral philosophy always intrigued me so it's been at the back of my mind. But in the 1980s, I wrote a book called Nuclear Ethics, which grew out of my experience in working in the State Department on nuclear weapons issues. I was trying to think my way through the ethical dimensions of nuclear weapons. I remember working with a French diplomat at that time and I asked him, "Do any of these moral issues bother you?" He said, "No, I don't worry about moral issues at all." He said, "I'm only interested whatever is good for the interests of France." I don't think he realized what a profound moral judgment he had just made.
- Joseph Nye:** 04:25 So that's always stuck in my mind that very often practitioners in international relations and theorists say that morals don't matter in international relations, it's all national interests. National interests bake the cake, and then politicians sprinkle a little moral icing on it to make it look pretty. But I've tried to demonstrate in the book that in some cases moral concerns of a president or leader are a crucial ingredient in the cake, not just icing that sprinkled on it. So, I wanted to try to illustrate that with historical examples and also with a framework for how to think about morals. It's been in the back of my mind for a long time, but near the end of my career, I'm finally writing it down.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 05:15 Well, this is a very appropriate conversation to have because we've had on two prominent realists, Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer. Mearsheimer of course is even more prominent, more closely aligned with the realist tradition. So why is someone like John or Steven, or maybe that's not even good example to necessarily draw the--
- Joseph Nye:** 05:38 No, they're great examples, both friends of mine and I respect both of them enormously.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 05:43 Where do you differ between them, and why do you feel morals are important in foreign affairs?
- Joseph Nye:** 05:50 Well, I differ because I think this cynical view that morals don't matter gets history wrong. I think that John and Steve, who are both very good political scientists, very clear thinkers, they're right to warn against successive moralism. Indeed, that's been the conventional wisdom of the field since the period after World War II. American moralism expressed by Woodrow Wilson, and the reaction to that during the 1930s, which led to isolationism, which meant the failure to stand up to Hitler and the threat of fascism, that became encoded after World War II in the writings of George Kennan and Hans J. Morgenthau and a number of European realists saying you Americans mess up the world by being so moralistic. That tradition of just be realist and don't pay any attention to these moral issues became the dominant form of training or thinking about international relations in the '50s or '60s.
- Joseph Nye:** 07:01 Michael Walzer, who took a different road, points out that when you were trained on this in the '50s or '60s, you just didn't pay any attention to morals. You were told not to. My difference with John and Steve, who are a modern version of that thinking, is not their realism. Realism often is the right place to start. My difference is that they stop where they start. Another rule is that if you are a realist, you're more likely to avoid the excesses of moralism. Steve Walt

calls his book *The Hell of Good intentions*, and we know that the path to hell is paved with good intentions. But the fact that you should start with realism doesn't mean you stop there. They tend to treat everything as though it's a matter of survival or ultimate security, and in fact, it's not.

Joseph Nye: 08:01 I use the example in the book of the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, who is killed in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul. When Trump was tasked for not standing up to the Saudis, and at least declaring that the murder was a poor act, the replies were, "Well, we have interests in oil, we have interests in arms sales, we have interests in regional security, and just get over it. The values don't matter." Even *The Wall Street Journal* tasked him for not mentioning American values. What I argue is that you could have done something like withdrawn your ambassador or simply issued a statement from the White House condemning the murder. You didn't have to break relations. You certainly didn't have to evade Saudi Arabia but argue that once you thought about your security concerns, that that's sufficient, that you don't have to think about values is a non-sequitur.

Joseph Nye: 09:02 So my problem with the neorealist, as a Walton Mearsheimer sometimes called, is not that they start with realism, but they stop where they start. In fact, you can say let's have a frank appraisal that we're not going to break relations with Saudi Arabia, but it doesn't mean you can't have a statement about this act is abhorrent to our view of human rights and morals. What I say in the book is, after I survey the different thoughts or models of thinking about international relations of realism, liberalism, and cosmopolitanism, is always start with realism, but then don't stop there. If it's not a matter of survival of lifeboat ethics, then there are concerns about values which can and should be brought in. Most of international relations is not about survival. It's about a whole range of issues, and the problem with the realists or the neorealist, as they're now called, is not that they start with realism, but they stop where they start.

Demetri Kofinas: 10:10 One of the things that's really challenging that makes this a difficult subject to tackle is that morality itself, there's a whole history of philosophy around morality and to what extent is our morals subjective and to what extent can we measure them objectively? All of this comes into focus in thinking about the moral dimensions of foreign policy. How do we judge? How do we go about judging the foreign policy of presidents?

Joseph Nye: 10:41 Well, I try to say that we do it badly, or in the past we've done it badly. Americans in particular have a rather moralistic view of ourselves. Sometimes it's called American exceptionalism. The argument that the Puritans left England because they wanted to worship God in a pure way, and then the founding fathers with the liberal ideas of the enlightenment believe that we could, with our independence, create a different and better world separated from the bad old world of Europe. But the trouble with that is it focused very heavily on our good intentions. Perhaps we had good intentions, not always, but we weren't always very moral in the means we use or the consequences he had. I mean, to be frank about it, we took a third of Mexico by force.

Joseph Nye: 11:37 If you look at the war in the Philippines at the end of the 19th century, where we tried to put down insurrection, we engaged in waterboarding. We did some pretty awful things in terms of massacring prisoners, and yet this is not something that we put in our history. We see ourselves as good, as having good

intentions. Therefore, if we do something that's good, it doesn't look that way from the point of view of a Mexican or a Philippine who's on the receiving end of that. What I've argued in the book is that you've got to get beyond this cycle of moralism versus realism, and you've got to say, "Start with realism," but then add some concerns from liberalism and cosmopolitanism that can express values, and you do that by essentially having what I call a three dimensional framework.

- Joseph Nye:** 12:32 You look at the intentions that the leaders have, you look at the means that they use and you look at the consequences they have, and then you try to balance out how they do across all three of these dimensions. Just to give you a concrete example of Ari Fleischer, who was George W. Bush's Press Secretary, argued that you had to admire George W. Bush for the clarity of his moral intentions. My argument to that is, suppose I grant him clear moral intentions, his so called freedom agenda. If he uses inappropriate means and immoral means, and if he has terrible unforeseen, unintended, but foreseeable consequences, then that's not a moral action. I use a simple example of if your daughter is a high school dance on a Friday night, and a friend says, "I'll bring her home early and get her home quickly because I know she has college exams the next morning, and I'll make sure she's home early."
- Joseph Nye:** 13:41 As he picks her up and start to drive her home, he doesn't notice that the road has become slippery from rain. He speeds at 70 or 80 miles an hour, he slid off the road, your daughter's killed when he hits a tree, you would not say, "Well, but his intentions were good." You would say that was inappropriate means and inadequate due diligence to potential bad consequences. That's what happened with the Iraq war. Bush may have had good intentions to remove Saddam Hussein and to install a democracy in Iraq, but he ignored the many papers written by the State Department and the Intelligence Community, which warned against the difficulties of doing this.
- Joseph Nye:** 14:32 Then the consequence is rather than stamping out terrorism in Iraq, he actually had the effect of strengthening Al Qaeda in Iraq, which eventually became ISIS, which had horrible consequences. Just for Fleischer to say, "Hey, you have to admire his moral clarity," is a travesty of moral reasoning. You have to look at all three dimensions, intentions, means, and consequences if you're going to have a balanced view of what's a moral action or not. So, what I tried to do in the book is get away from this we're either moral or immoral, show that many of these actions involve difficult waiting of a variety of factors, but we ought to think of all three of those dimensions of intention, means, and consequences and not just settle for one.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 15:27 One of the things I thought about while reading your book, and you have a lot of these great thought experiments, this isn't the only one, had to do with consequences. A good example would be comparing, let's say, Bush's decision to invade Iraq. There you could argue both the consequences were bad and the decision itself was bad or had certain ... Without talking about the intentions, it was a bad decision. But then you could take someone like Reagan, and Ronald Reagan's decision to push forward with SDI, with the Strategic Defense Initiative, the Star Wars program.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 15:59 You could argue that at the time it was a bad decision, you could argue that it recklessly endangered America, that it broke with a decade of successful detente, that it jeopardized mutually assured destruction which had been such an effective tool in preventing all out nuclear war. But it turned out really great. I guess my question is how much can we judge the effectiveness or the goodness of a decision by looking at its consequences?
- Joseph Nye:** 16:29 Well, that's a good question. It's almost the mirror opposite of just looking at the intention. Sometimes people say, "An action is good because it had good intentions," which I've just argued is not a very clear moral reasoning. Other times people say, "Well, it turned out okay, so it's good," and that strikes me as about a shallow, a type of moral reasoning as the intentions focus. So, on the Star Wars decision, which is intriguing, it probably had a net beneficial effect by scaring the Russians into realizing that they couldn't keep up with the United States in military technology. There were some people in the Reagan administration that said that even though it's impractical and infeasible and it's not going to work, it has this side effect and therefore it's okay.
- Joseph Nye:** 17:22 Reagan himself actually thought it was going to work. He was a believer on it, and the decision was made on very shallow grounds. I mean, he didn't have that sophisticated view of what he was trying to do in terms of bringing about those consequences. He thought he was going to in fact make a nuclear attack impossible by this wonderful new technology. In that sense, I would say this decision by Reagan's, even though it had a beneficial consequences, beneficial unintended consequences, was not a good moral decision. It wasn't clear in the total summary of all three dimensions, intentions, means, and consequences. Just to say something turns out okay, therefore it's good, doesn't mean that-
- Demetri Kofinas:** 18:16 It's tempting.
- Joseph Nye:** 18:17 Yeah. But I mean, another example is Richard Nixon and Vietnam. Many people say, "Well, Nixon's decisions on Vietnam were good because it ended the Vietnam War, and the Vietnam War good, therefore the decision was good." But the way Nixon ended the war, who slowly with an effort to create what was called a decent interval to help American credibility, the decent interval being the time between when the Americans pull out and when Hanoi took over the Saigon, that decent interval was two years and the cost of that was 22,000 American lives. You might've been able to achieve the same thing.
- Joseph Nye:** 19:03 If you look at the good relations we have with Vietnam today, you might've been able to achieve the same thing with much lower costs. So, getting out of Vietnam or ending the war, good thing. The question of, is that sufficient to make it a good moral judgment? No, you have to get in this question that is, were there other possible means and were the consequences of wasting 22,000 American lives and countless Vietnamese lives, was that worth it? I say no, and I discuss this in the book. But there's still some people who'd say yes.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 19:39 Well, this also brings up something else, and now I really want to get into some case examples because it's also very interesting to explore some of these presidencies. But for example, Obama's decision to pull out of Iraq, that could look like a good decision today, but let's say in 20 years with further information, it may turn out to be a bad decision if ISIS continues to grow or we

have terrorist attacks, or there is some geopolitical implication for Iran and Iran becomes more powerful. In other words, history plays a role. The longer the timeframe, the shadow of history, so to speak, that we have to look at the more accurately we can judge some of these decisions.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 20:17 But I want to actually stay there with Reagan a bit because his presidency is such an interesting one because Reagan's personality was such an important part of his relationship with Gorbachev, but so was Gorbachev. One of the things I thought about when I was contemplating this was how Nixon might have fared, who was a very impersonable president. How might he have fared if he was president during the 1980s? The larger question that's contextualized there is how important is it, when someone is president, that certain presidents are better suited for certain times? Those are my two questions.
- Joseph Nye:** 20:59 Well, they're the right question. I've often used that same sort of counterfactual in terms of Jimmy Carter. Jimmy Carter came into office when the ... '70s when Brezhnev was in his dotage and the Soviet system was basically totally inflexible. Imagine that Gorbachev had come to power say 10 years earlier, or that Carter had come to power five or 10 years later, it's quite plausible that Carter and Gorbachev could have done quite well together. But Carter and Brezhnev was a bad mix. So, in that sense, you could argue that the timing of those presidencies was unfortunate, that Carter had the bad luck to be dealt Brezhnev and Reagan had the good luck, at least in his second term, to be dealt the Gorbachev. But to give--
- Demetri Kofinas:** 21:56 And a very bad economy as well.
- Joseph Nye:** 21:57 And a bad economy as well, exactly. But to give Reagan proper credit, many people misunderstand Reagan. They say, "Well, Reagan talked tough and brought the Soviets to their knees." In fact, Reagan didn't talk tough and he got the Soviet's attention, but more important, he decided he would bargain with Gorbachev and he drew upon his experience as head of the Screen Actors Guild in Hollywood after he talked tough to attend a real negotiation. He saw that before many people in his administration did. Caspar Weinberger, his defense secretary was furious about that, and George Schultz, the Secretary of States sided with Reagan. But at one point Weinberger tried to get Reagan to fire Schultz because Schultz was going along with these ideas of negotiations with the Soviets.
- Joseph Nye:** 22:56 Weinberger thought that was terrible. Reagan essentially came down on Schultz's side and he perceived that he could negotiate with Gorbachev, and it was a good thing. A dimension of Reagan, which is often less noticed, that he could be flexible and compromise and bargain and negotiate, turn out to be part of his success in easing the Cold War. Bush, essentially ... Bush 41 was the one who ended it, but Reagan prepared the ground and people don't give him enough credit for that aspect of what he did.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 23:34 It's interesting because if he was dealing with a more cynical leader, maybe if he was dealing with a Khrushchev, he could have been perhaps taken advantage of.
- Joseph Nye:** 23:43 Yes. Yes, absolutely. Or sometimes people say that Andropov, the KGB boss who was the leader before or two before Gorbachev, if Andropov had had good

kidneys, he died of kidney disease, the end of the Cold War might've taken another 10 or 20 years.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 24:05 Let's go through some of these cases. I've highlighted a few that I found most interesting. The first one deals with the establishment or the germification of the nuclear taboo, and that would be looking at Truman's decision not to use the third atom bomb on Japan, as well as his decision to confront and then remove General Douglas MacArthur after he and the general came into conflict over the decision to use nuclear weapons in Korea and in China. Then I also want to talk about ... and just for listeners to know, I'm very curious to discuss the Cuban missile crisis. Watergate is not a foreign policy crisis, but I think because of the moral dimensions of your book, it would be an interesting one to discuss how Nixon's personal morality as an individual impacted his handling of that crisis.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 24:55 Because I think that's another thing that's also interesting. Each of these people, these are human beings. I mean, they're vested with enormous powers by holding the office of the presidency, but they are still people. Their morality impacts their decision making. Then there are a few other ones because you of course were an Under Secretary of State in the Carter administration, and I think exploring the Iran hostage crisis would be an interesting one, and H. W. Bush and the fall of the USSR in the Gulf War, and then Bill Clinton and Obama and then Trump. But let's start with the nuclear taboo because this is a very interesting one. I know a lot of people don't know that Truman had the opportunity both to drop a third atom bomb, but also to bomb ... to give Douglas MacArthur who I think asked for 37 nuclear weapons to drop all over Korea and China, that he drew the line there. What does that tell us? What can we learn from that?
- Joseph Nye:** 25:47 Well, it's a fascinating case because Truman is often condemned by moral theologians for dropping the bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and there was a famous Oxford philosopher, Elizabeth Anscombe, who refused to attend the ceremony at Oxford in 1948 when Truman was given an honorary degree because of his dropping the nuclear weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But it was much more complex than that. Truman really knew little about the nuclear or atomic bombs. Indeed, nobody knew that much about them. After all, they were only tested in the summer of 1945 shortly before they were used, and there was pretty broad assumption in the government that they were designed to bring World War II to an end when they were going to be used. General Groves, who was the director of the Manhattan project to develop the bomb was asked about this once.
- Joseph Nye:** 26:52 He said, "Truman was like a boy who's put on the back of a toboggan that's already going downhill and it's conceivable he could have stopped it, but it's not very likely." What is interesting is that after Truman saw the first effects of the bombing in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and that was pretty much of a packaged one uranium and one plutonium bomb were going to be used. So it wasn't as though there was a long period between those two, the question came where to use this third bomb, which was located on Tinian Island and which would have taken another week or so to prepare for, and Truman said to his advisors, "No, I'm not going to kill that many more women and children." Well, that's a moral impulse and that made the difference.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 27:40 Yeah. No, I want to really highlight that because it is of course the president's prerogative to use nuclear weapons, and in this case, if Truman had wanted to, he had every right and also, he had the support of his generals.
- Joseph Nye:** 27:52 Right, and if MacArthur had been precedent, sure he would have used it. But that brings us to 1950 because what's interesting there is that the American action in Korea to stop the North Koreans after they crossed the 38th parallel, MacArthur who was Commander in Chief from the far East decided that they would move North toward the Yellow River. The Chinese said that if the Americans came up to their border, they would intervene, and we ignored that, went ahead and we were swept back down the Peninsula. MacArthur said to Truman, basically, "If you give me right to use a large number of nuclear weapons in Chinese cities, I can win this war for you," and Truman's advisors who were telling him, "If you lose this war or it stalemates, you're going to lose your presidency," and Truman said no. He said no partly out of a combination of prudence, but partly out of that same feeling that he didn't want to kill that many more women and children.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 29:04 MacArthur reportedly wanted to use nuclear waste in addition to that, the seal off North Korea.
- Joseph Nye:** 29:09 Yeah. MacArthur's sense of morality was quite different from Truman's, but that's an illustration that the cynics who say that morals are just icing that sprinkle on the cake get history wrong. The Truman's moral views were an essential ingredient of the cake, and if you think of the long-term implications of that, if nuclear weapons had become normal war fighting weapons rather than special weapons for deterrence purposes only, the world would look very different today. Thomas Schelling, the Nobel economist who wrote in his Nobel lecture that nuclear taboo is probably one of the most important things that's happened in the 75 years after World War II.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 29:55 There's a flip side to this as well, which is that you could argue Truman's decision to drop the first two bombs actually may have prevented nuclear war later on, during the Cold War between the US and the USSR, because the world had seen just how destructive they were in Japan. Under circumstances where we could let's say justify them in moral terms, because the Japanese had both attacked Pearl Harbor, but also because not dropping the bombs according to the military would lead ... I think the projections were an additional 200,000 lost lives that ... I don't remember what the number was.
- Joseph Nye:** 30:32 Well, historians have gone back over that decision and revised the number downward. Truman was told that it might save 500,000 lives. Historians today, who have plowed this field many, many times think the number might've been down to 100,000. But you're right. The key point was that if you had not dropped the bombs, the question from the pure consequentialist point of view is how many American lives and how many Japanese lives defending the home islands would have been lost? They might've been more than the numbers that were killed in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. So, there's a long tradition of debating the initial acts of Hiroshima and Nagasaki based on those immediate consequences of ending the war.

- Joseph Nye:** 31:21 But you could also include those longer term consequences of the lessons of how devastating these were and what they would mean. Now, to make sure that we don't oversimplify history, Truman continued to think of ways where he might be able to use nuclear weapons to get himself out of the dilemma he was in, but he never succumbed to it.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 31:44 Well, of course the taboo had not yet been established, and in fact, it wasn't even established under Eisenhower who was very concerned about nuclear war, but who actually wanted to make sure that these weapons could be considered usable. How did that square in Eisenhower's thinking?
- Joseph Nye:** 32:01 Well, it's a great paradox of nuclear weapons, which is, they're so devastating that you don't want to use them. But in less, there's some prospect of use. They're not going to have any deterrent value. You've got to square that circle; you've got to leave the impression that you might use them under some circumstances so that you can deter actions that might otherwise lead to war. But at the same time, you don't want to get yourself into a situation where you use them because they're so disproportionate in their consequences. So, Eisenhower was quite adept at squaring that circle. At one time, James Haggerty, his Press Secretary comes into him and says, "You've got a press conference of whether you're going to use nuclear weapons to defend Kimo and Matsu," the islands off the coast of China, between China and Taiwan, and he said, "What are you going to say, Mr. President?"
- Joseph Nye:** 33:00 Eisenhower says, "Don't worry about Jim. I'll just confuse the hell out of him." If you look at Eisenhower's statements on nuclear weapons, he talked tough. But when you look at the internal records of what happened when he was actually making decisions, he's very clear that he didn't want to use them. So, at one point, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff comes to Eisenhower and says, "I think we're going to have to use nuclear weapons." Eisenhower said, "You boys must be crazy. You don't want to use those on Asians again, after 10 years." Another time Chair of the Joint Chief says, "Maybe we should have a preventive use of nuclear weapons against the Soviet Union before they get to strong."
- Joseph Nye:** 33:48 Eisenhower says, "After you've done that and you've created devastation between Europe and Vladivostok what are you going to do with it? How are you going to manage that? What's going to be the effects?" When it came to actual use, Eisenhower was very prudent. But when it came to declaratory policy, he wanted to make sure that he never got boxed into a situation where he lost his deterrent, and so he talked about usability quite a lot.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 34:20 Yeah, we have that quote in your book and it's a great quote, and I have it in the rundown for listeners. I know you think highly of Truman. Where does Eisenhower rank in your estimation?
- Joseph Nye:** 34:29 Well, Eisenhower comes out relatively high in the sense that he was a pragmatic and practical person who had been through war, who had seen it's horrors, and who was pretty convinced that you need to be cautious and prudent in the actions you took. Therefore, for example, when the French who were about to lose their position in North Vietnam at the Dien Bien Phu, Eisenhower was told that ... The military said to him, "We could use nuclear weapons, or we could put in American troops." Eisenhower's response was those jungles will swallow

our boys by the divisions, so he didn't do it. Now, it's ironic because Eisenhower also coined the domino theory, which said if Vietnam falls and the other Southeast Asian countries fall, which of course was a misplaced metaphor, we should have been thinking instead of checkers red versus black, the enemy of my enemy is my friend.

- Joseph Nye:** 35:37 The domino theory got us and his successors into trouble, but Eisenhower himself didn't succumb to it. So, Eisenhower turned out to be a much more savvy and pragmatic leader than his words would have suggested, and I rate him quite high. I think where I would fault him is some of the covert interventions. He didn't want to go to war, but he thought maybe we can do this on the sly, and so overthrowing governments in the Iran or Guatemala, that's okay through surrogates. But in retrospect, I think it was done to prevent the Soviets from developing forward basis or forward positions in the Cold War. But I think it probably wasn't necessary and it did have unfortunate long-term consequences. Eisenhower wasn't flawless, but on the whole, he managed to preserve peace during a very tense period of the Cold War.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 36:37 We explored that period in our last episode with Thomas Reed on active measures, because the history of covert action and disinformation and political warfare during the 1950s, particularly in Germany, in Berlin, it's a rich history. Also, another thing I want to mention before we get to any other examples is, I think the domino theory is a great example of how important mental models and-
- Joseph Nye:** 37:03 Absolutely.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 37:03 ... mental maps are. Whether it's the domino theory, whether it's mutually assured destruction, these are operational frameworks that not only presidents use, but that they inherit from previous administrations that evolve over time. It's a fascinating thing to consider. Let's look at the Cuban missile crisis, because this is one of the most famous examples of where presidential leadership could have made all the difference between nuclear holocaust or peace. In fact, we did not get nuclear holocaust, but at this time, the number of nuclear weapons in both the United States and the Soviet Union had expanded dramatically. I mean, we were talking about a "missile gap" in the 1960 election. So, both countries were incentivized to grow their arsenals. So, there was a lot at stake. How do we judge JFK's handling of this crisis?
- Joseph Nye:** 37:57 Well, Kennedy forever will be glorified in the history books for the careful and sensitive way in which he got us out of the crisis, and he deserves the credit for that. But on the other hand, part of the reason we got into the crisis was his mishandling of things earlier. Kennedy met with Khrushchev in Vienna and left the impression in Khrushchev's mind that Kennedy is a young guy who could be pushed around. Kennedy also engaged in the covert action program to overthrow or assassinate Castro, Operation Mongoose it was called, and that gave the impression that the Americans were indeed ready to intervene in Cuba. Then of course you had the Bay of Pigs, which Kennedy inherited from Eisenhower, but didn't properly manage, which turned out to be a fiasco. Kennedy in his actions left Khrushchev to feel that-
- Demetri Kofinas:** 39:02 He could push him.

- Joseph Nye:** 39:03 ... he could push him around, A, but B, that if Khrushchev didn't do something, Kennedy was going to make some problems for him. But to be honest about it, I think the Cuban missile crisis was more than anything about Berlin, and there the interesting point was that Khrushchev wanted to get the Americans out of Berlin so that he could solidify Soviet control of East Germany and thereby Eastern Europe. In that sense, when the Americans, after it turned out that the missile crisis ... I mean, after it turned out that the missile gap was actually in our favor rather than against us and that we had an overwhelming missile superiority, Khrushchev came up with the idea that if he put tactical nuclear weapons in Cuba, he could protect Cuba, but also increases bargaining power to try to push the Americans to come to an agreement of getting out of Berlin. That was really the origins of the Cuban missile crisis.
- Joseph Nye:** 40:11 What's interesting in terms of Kennedy's behavior is having made a mess of the Bay of Pigs when the missiles were discovered in Cuba, Kennedy had the sense to change his processes. He created this executive committee which brought in people at various levels of government with various degrees of expertise. He made sure that he was at some of the meetings, but not all the meetings. So, he reserved the judgments to himself and he played for time. He stretched out the time horizon and he authorized his brother, Bobby, to eventually in the end do a bargain with the Soviets, a bargain of removing American missiles from Turkey if the Soviets took their missiles out of Cuba. In that sense, when people say, "What was the solution to the Cuban missile crisis? Did we shoot them out?"
- Joseph Nye:** 41:09 Another is a bombing attack or squeeze them out the blockade or buy them out the trade of the missiles in Turkey for missiles in Cuba, it was a bit of each but not the shoot them out. There was a bit of squeeze with the blockade and a bit of a buy them out. But Kennedy managed this in a way which drew us back from the brink of what could have been a real disaster. One of the things we didn't know at the time, but discovered later, is that the Soviet had actually already transferred nuclear warheads to Cuba, and McNamara later in his memoirs talks about this, that if we'd known that we would have been even more cautious. But Kennedy's prudence just on the fact that ... the prospect that we could lead to a total disaster led to a very sensible handling of the resolution of the missile crisis. I think that's where he deserves credit. But if you want to blame him, it would be on some of his actions before which led to the onset of the missile crisis.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 42:20 Well, I had read years ago in a biography of Castro's that he had reportedly told the Soviet ambassador to Cuba at the time that Khrushchev should sacrifice Cuba in the event of further escalation with the United States over the Cuban missile crisis. So, there were a lot of dimensions to this. I mean, there were a lot of players involved.
- Joseph Nye:** 42:39 Yeah. Castro basically said that he would be willing to go down. He was going to be the Sampson and the temple, I guess. He did not want the Soviets to capitulate to the United States. Years later, the Kennedy School held his series of what they called a living oral history meetings in which we brought together people like Dobrynin and Gromyko and Shakhnazarov from the Soviet side and McNamara and Bundy and Sorensen, and Douglas Dillon, and so forth on the American side, and went back over these decisions at that time as how they looked --

Demetri Kofinas: 43:22 Oh, that must have been fascinating.

Joseph Nye: 43:22 It was fascinating, 25 years later. It's in one of these meetings that I think that McNamara talked about this fact that we hadn't known the Soviets had already placed the nuclear warheads in Cuba.

Demetri Kofinas: 43:38 It's so important for people to appreciate just how different the stakes were then. It's hard for people to understand now the significance of Castro having taken over Cuba only three years before the crisis, right? I mean, it was a complete different time, and to that effect, I've recommended listeners do this in the past, and I'll say it again, one of the most helpful things for me in understanding American foreign policy was all the hours I spent listening to tapes from the Kennedy administration onward, all the way through to LBJ and Nixon. Everyone knows about the Nixon tapes, but there are tons of tapes of the LBJ administration and the Kennedy administration, and it's very insightful. You lived through the Cuban missile crisis. What were you doing during that time, and what was that experience like for you?

Joseph Nye: 44:24 Well, fortunately I was in Africa. I was doing my PhD thesis in East Africa. For me, the Cuban missile crisis was something I read about in the front page of the Uganda Argus, local newspaper in Uganda. So, it seemed weird and odd. I mean, without friends to talk to who were connected to people in Washington, you got this picture how this case which almost blew up the world looked from the perspective of an East African capital, and it was just puzzling. What the hell is going on? It was only later-

Demetri Kofinas: 45:04 That's fascinating.

Joseph Nye: 45:05 Later when I came back and started studying these things, and I got involved in chairing some of these meetings on the living oral history of the Cuban missile crisis, I got into it very deeply.

Demetri Kofinas: 45:19 What was Africa like in 1962?

Joseph Nye: 45:23 Well, it was fascinating. I got to watch the independence of two countries, Uganda and Kenya. They were just becoming independent countries after British colonialism. I was doing a study whether it was possible to create a common market between the East African [inaudible 00:45:41]. They had one that they'd inherited under colonial rule, but it looked like it was falling apart, and the question is, would they be able to maintain it? There was great deal of rhetoric about Pan-Africanism about overcoming the arbitrary colonial borders and uniting African countries, and I wanted to see whether all this rhetoric made any difference to the reality. So, I wrote my thesis about ... called Pan-Africanism and East African Integration, a long way from nuclear weapons.

Demetri Kofinas: 46:15 That's fascinating. That's a whole conversation right there. I can't imagine what ... That must have been one of the coolest experiences of your life to be in a place like that at that time. Although, maybe that's a lot-

Joseph Nye: 46:25 Well, that's actually, it was great because here I was, a mere Harvard graduate student, but able to interview presidents of countries like Milton Obote of

Uganda and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania. If I'd been five or 10 years later, I'd never would have had that kind of access.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 46:45 We're not going to get anywhere near to finish all the questions I have. So, I'm going to actually skip ahead from ... I mentioned I wanted to discuss Watergate and Iran and the Iran hostage crisis. But let's discuss H. W. Bush and the end of the Cold War, because you could argue that this was the most consequential period of the last 80 years, the end of one period and the beginning of a new period. Things could have gone very wrong very quickly. So how do you score someone like H. W. Bush who only was president for one term? This was something that he regretted deeply for a very long time, and it was also something that I think informed many of his son's decisions. He didn't want to be a one-term president like his father. But he also did a lot in that one term. How do we judge H. W. and his administration?
- Joseph Nye:** 47:37 Well, I put H. W. Bush at the top of the pile. In other words, in my leaders who I think we're most effective and moral in the period between 1945 and today, Bush ranks near the top. It's ironic because in 1988 I was an advisor to Michael Dukakis and doing everything I could to try to prevent Bush from becoming precedent. At least that shows that my rankings, when I do history, are impartial and separate from my political preferences at the time. Or you could say alternatively, that I was naive and wrong in '88. But any case, Bush gets full marks from my point of view, because he had two characteristics of leadership that are really essential for effective and for moral leadership.
- Joseph Nye:** 48:35 One was emotional intelligence, which is the ability to manage your emotions and to understand them to use them both to reach out to people, but prevent them from distorting your own views. The thing he had was what I call contextual intelligence, the ability to size up the context of a power situation and to realize who holds the high cards and how can that be changed, and to see that in a clear-headed appraisal. H. W. Bush had a lifetime of experience to prepare him for the presidency. He worked in China, the UN, Congressman, so forth CIA director. He had a very clear appraisal of what the world looked like, great contextual intelligence. But he also had emotional intelligence, which is he didn't let his personal needs get in the way of a clear appraisal of what needed to be done.
- Joseph Nye:** 49:41 One of the great examples of this was when the Berlin Wall came down in November of 1989, many people were criticizing Bush for not making a bigger fuss about it. William Saphire, then the editorialist for the New York Times criticized Bush for not making a bigger fuss about the fall of the wall. Bush's comment was, "I'm not going to dance on the wall. I've got to think of how this affects Gorbachev because I've got to negotiate with Gorbachev." That shows extraordinary emotional maturity. I mean, sure it would have been easy, cheap political score for Bush to have gloated publicly about it as president, but he also knew that he was going to have to negotiate some really tough decisions, such as the removal of Soviet troops from Eastern Europe, East Germany, the reunification of Germany, whether Germany as unified entity could join NATO or would have to be neutralized.
- Joseph Nye:** 50:48 These were going to be things which they got if they went wrong, could have been catastrophic. Bush knew that and managed to work with Gorbachev in a

way where the Cold War was ended with Germany unified inside NATO and not a shot being fired. That was an extraordinary accomplishment, and it depended a lot on Bush's emotional intelligence as well as his contextual intelligence.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 51:18 It's also interesting to draw a distinction between someone who can have a high emotional intelligence and operate effectively in personal interactions and have personal relationships, strong diplomatic relationships between people, but who can struggle when it comes to communicating and educating the public. I think that's one area-
- Joseph Nye:** 51:36 That's right.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 51:37 ... where you could say Bush really fell short, and it was obviously exemplified in the 1992 debates between him and Clinton, and his looking at the watch and his impatience with the debates. Those were opportunities where he could have educated the public on his vision for what a post-Cold War world would have looked like.
- Joseph Nye:** 51:56 That's exactly right. I mean, Bush's modesty, his tendency to be somewhat self-effacing, which is a dramatic difference --
- Demetri Kofinas:** 52:04 A lot like Truman actually, in that sense, right?
- Joseph Nye:** 52:06 A lot like Truman, but very different from his son. That hurt him when it came to rallying public support. Reagan, who had less contextual intelligence than Bush did, was much better able to relate to people emotionally in terms of rallying the public and so forth. Something you said earlier about different presidents have different fits for different times, but it may have been unfortunate for Bush in terms of reelection, but it was fortunate for us as a country that Bush was president at the time the wall came down.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 52:46 I want to discuss one more president before we move it to the overtime, where I may want to discuss Obama's presidency as well, and then switch into where we are today, really get into some of the contemporary issues. But the presidency I'd actually want to ask you about, ironically, it's not his son. It's not George W. Bush and the Iraq War, which was, you could argue, the greatest foreign policy catastrophe in the post-World War II era. But I actually want to discuss Clinton because I've often felt, when looking back, that this was a presidency where a lot of opportunities were lost. As the years roll by, it feels more and more like that.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 53:28 But you gave Clinton actually a relatively good score, if I remember correctly. I've got your book here in front of me. I'm trying to go through it. But talk to me about the Clinton period, this unipolar moment. Could Bill Clinton have done more to either expand the peace dividend or to put forward a more robust vision for American supremacy and the "new world order" that Bush had talked about, and did he squander that opportunity?
- Joseph Nye:** 53:55 Well, Clinton got better as he went along. He did not have a great deal of contextual intelligence right at the beginning. Basically, didn't quite know what to do with the problems of former Yugoslavia, particularly the issues related to the civil war in Bosnia, and he wrestled with that for over a year. Then he also

had the trouble with ... he inherited this mission in Somalia of delivering humanitarian aid, which grew out of proportion and led to eventually the famous incident of Black Hawk Down where people wanted to pull all American troops out right away. The troops --

- Demetri Kofinas:** 54:43 It's a good example of how early disasters or mistakes inform later decisions, whether it was his decision not to intervene in Rwanda in Clinton's case, or Obama with the war in Libya and subsequently his decision not to push forward after Assad crossed that red line of using chemical weapons in 2012.
- Joseph Nye:** 55:03 Right. No, and you could argue that Clinton, his failure in Rwanda, which he had himself regarded later as a failure, was very strongly affected by the situation in Somalia and Mogadishu. It's not that you could have prevented the genocide, but you could have supported the UN peacekeeping forces that were there and you might've saved some of the people who were later massacred. Clinton, I think regretted that. He however basically begins to get his footing after that. If you look at the eventual Dayton peace process that Dick Holbrooke negotiated, if you look at the things that Clinton did try to structure the international economy by the North American Free Trade Association, which Bush had proposed, but Clinton put through the establishment of the World Trade Organization, the efforts to what he called and enlarge and engage the area of democratic nations.
- Joseph Nye:** 56:10 These were efforts where Clinton turned to a more positive agenda rather than simply the reactive agenda in his first years. I would include in that something that I was involved in, which was the reaffirmation of the US-Japan Security Treaty which was in very bad shape in 1993 and '94, but which Clinton reaffirmed and strengthened. That was important in sense of structuring the balance of power in East Asia, as China was rising in its power. This is where you go back to basic realism. If you have three major powers in the region, US, Japan and China, it's better to be part of the two than the one, and so reaffirming the US-Japan Security Treaty was a very important aspect of structuring the environment as China's growth increased.
- Joseph Nye:** 57:12 Clinton I think had a number of decisions that were important, and I think he did better in his later period than he did in his early years. So, I think it was a mixed record. He comes out in the middle rank of my presidents rather than the top rank, but I think even accounting for possible bias on my part, because I was serving in his Defense Department, I still think he deserves better than sometimes given credit.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 57:46 Professor Nye, I want to ask you one more question about the Clinton administration and the 1990s, that period, but I'm going to save it for the second half of our conversation. For regular listeners, you know the drill. If you're new to the program, if you haven't subscribed yet to our Audiophile, Autodidact or Super Nerd tiers, head over to patreon.com/hiddenforces, or scroll down to the summary section of this week's episode and click on the link that sends you to the Hidden Forces Patreon page, where you can continue to listen to the second half of my conversation with Professor Nye, including gaining access to today's rundown and transcript of this conversation.

Demetri Kofinas: 58:26 Professor, stick around. We're going to move the second half of our conversation to the overtime, and I also want to discuss the Obama administration and of course the Trump administration and some of the contemporary issues that we're dealing with today, including a comparison to the 1970s and the Kissinger period and détente, and if we have lessons to draw from that. Thank you.

Joseph Nye: 58:50 Okay.

Demetri Kofinas: 58:52 Today's episode of Hidden Forces was recorded in New York City. For more information about this week's episode, or if you want easy access to related programming, visit our website at hiddenforces.io, and subscribe to our free email list. If you want access to overtime segments, episode, transcripts, and show rundowns full of links and detailed information related to each and every episode, check out our premium subscription available through the Hidden Forces website or through our Patreon page at patreon.com/hiddenforces. Today's episode was produced by me and edited by Stylianos Nicolaou. For more episodes, you can check out our website at hiddenforces.io. Join the conversation at Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram @HiddenForcesPod, or send me an email at dk@hiddenforces.io. As always, thanks for listening. We'll see you next week.