

**Lex Fridman Podcast #445 - Vivek Ramaswamy: Trump, Conservatism, Nationalism,  
Immigration, and War**

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**Lex Fridman**

The following is a conversation with Vivek Ramaswamy about the future of conservatism in America. He has written many books on this topic, including his latest called *Truths: The Future of America First*. He ran for president this year in the Republican primary and is considered by many to represent the future of the Republican Party. Before all that, he was a successful biotech entrepreneur and investor with a degree in biology from Harvard and a law degree from Yale. As always, when the topic is politics, I will continue talking to people on both the left and the right with empathy, curiosity and backbone. This is a Lex Fridman podcast. To support it, please check out our sponsors in the description. And now, dear friends, here's Vivek Ramaswamy. You are one of the great elucidators of conservative ideas, so you're the perfect person to ask. What is conservatism? What's your, let's say, conservative vision for America?

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Well, actually this is one of my criticisms of the modern Republican Party and direction of the conservative movement is that we've gotten so good at describing what we're against. There's a list of things that we could rail against, wokeism, transgender ideology, climate ideology, COVIDism, COVID policies, the radical Biden agenda, the radical Harris agenda, the list goes on. But actually what's missing in the conservative movement right now is what we actually stand for. What is our vision for the future of the country? And I saw that as a deficit at the time I started my presidential campaign. It was in many ways the purpose of my campaign because I do feel that that's why we didn't have the red wave in 2022. They tried to blame Donald Trump. They tried to blame abortion. They blamed a bunch of individual specific issues or factors. I think the real reason we didn't have that red wave was that we got so practiced at criticizing Joe Biden that we forgot to articulate who we are and what we stand for. So what do we stand for as conservatives? I think we stand for the ideals that we fought the American Revolution for in 1776. Ideals like merit. That the best person gets the job without regard to their genetics. That you get ahead in this country, not on the color of your skin, but on the content of your character. Free speech, an open debate, not just as some sort of catchphrase, but the idea that any opinion, no matter how heinous, you get to express it in the United States of America. Self-governance and this is a big one right now, is that the people we elect to run the government, they're no longer the ones who actually run the government. We, in the conservative movement, I believe, should believe in restoring self-governance where it's not bureaucrats running the show, but actually elected representatives. And then the other ideal that the nation was founded on that I think we need to revive and I think as a north star of the conservative movement is restoring the rule of law in this country. You think about even the abandonment of the rule of law at the southern border. It's particularly personal to me as the kid of legal immigrants to this country. You and I actually share a couple of aspects in common in that regard. That also though means your first act of entering this country can't break the law. So there's some policy commitments and principles, merit, free speech, self-governance, rule of law. And then I think culturally what does it mean to be a conservative is it means we believe in the

anchors of our identity, in truth, the value of the individual family, nation and God beat race, gender, sexuality and climate. If we have the courage to actually stand for our own vision. And that's a big part of what's been missing. And it's a big part of not just through the campaign, but through a lot of my future advocacy, that's the vacuum I'm aiming to fill.

**Lex Fridman**

Yeah, we'll talk about each of those issues. Immigration, the growing bureaucracy of government, religion is a really interesting topic, something you've spoken about a lot, but you've also had a lot of really tense debates. So you're a perfect person to ask to steel man the other side.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Yeah.

**Lex Fridman**

So let me ask you about progressivism.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Sure.

**Lex Fridman**

Can you steel man the case for progressivism and left- wing ideas?

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Yeah, so look, I think the strongest case, particularly for left-wing ideas in the United States, so in the American context, is that the country has been imperfect in living up to its ideals. So even though our founding fathers preached the importance of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness and freedom, they didn't practice those values in terms of many of our founding fathers being slave owners, inequalities with respect to women and other disempowered such that they say that that created a power structure in this country that continues to last to this day. The vestiges of what happened even in 1860 in the course of human history isn't that long ago and that we need to do everything in our power to correct for those imbalances in power in the United States. That's the core view of the modern left. I'm not criticizing it right now, I'm steel manning it, I'm trying to give you I think a good of why the left believes they have a compelling case for the government stepping into correct for historical or present inequalities. I can give you my counter rebuttal of that, but the best statement of the left, I think that it's the fact that we've been imperfect in living up to those ideals. In order to fix that, we're going to have to take steps that are severe steps if needed to correct for those historical inequalities before we actually have true equality of opportunity in this country. That's the case for the left-wing view in modern America.

**Lex Fridman**

So what's your criticism of that?

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

So my concern with it is even if that's well-motivated, I think that it recreates many of the same problems that they were setting out to solve. I'll give you a really tangible example of that in the present right now. I may be alone amongst prominent conservatives who would say something like this right now, but I think it's true, so I'm going to say it. I'm actually even in the last year, last year and a half, seeing actually a rise in anti-black and anti-minority racism in this country, which is a little curious. When over the last 10 years we got as close to Martin Luther King's promise land as you could envision, a place where you have every American, regardless of their skin color, able to vote without obstruction, a place where you have people able to get the highest jobs in the land without race standing in their way. Why are we seeing that resurgence? In part, it's because of I believe that left-wing obsession with racial equity over the course of the last 20 years in this country. And so when you take something away from someone based on their skin color, and that's what correcting for prior injustice was supposed to do, the left-wing view is you have to correct for prior injustice by saying that whether you're a white, straight, cis, man, you have certain privileges that you have to actually correct for. When you take something away from somebody based on their genetics, you actually foster greater animus towards other groups around you. And so the problem with that philosophy is that it creates several problems with it, but the most significant problem that I think everybody can agree we want to avoid is to actually fan the flames of the very divisions that you supposedly wanted to heal. I see that in our context of our immigration policy as well. You think about even what's going on in, I'm from Ohio, I was born and raised in Ohio and I live there today, the controversy in Springfield, Ohio. I personally don't blame really any of the people who are in Springfield, either the native people born and raised in Springfield or even the Haitians who have been moved to Springfield. But it ends up becoming a divide and conquer strategy and outcome where if you put 20,000 people in a community where, 50,000 people, where the 20,000 are coming in don't know the language, are unable to follow the traffic laws, are unable to assimilate, you know there's going to be a reactionary backlash. And so even though that began perhaps with some type of charitable instinct, some type of sympathy for people who went through the earthquake in 2010 in Haiti and achieved temporary protective status in the United States, what began with sympathy, what began with earnest intentions actually creates the very division and reactionary response that supposedly we say we wanted to avoid. So that's my number one criticism of that left-wing worldview. Number two is I do believe that merit and equity are actually incompatible. Merit and group quotas are incompatible. You can have one or the other, you can't have both. And the reason why is no two people, and I think it's the beautiful things, true between you and I, between you, I and all of our friends or family or strangers or neighbors or colleagues, no two people have the same skillsets. We're each endowed by different gifts. We're each endowed with different talents. And that's the beauty of human diversity. And a true meritocracy is a system in

which you're able to achieve the maximum of your God-given potential without anybody standing in your way. But that means necessarily there's going to be differences in outcomes in a wide range of parameters, not just financial, not just money, not just fame or currency or whatever it is. There's just going to be different outcomes for different people in different spheres of lives. And that's what meritocracy demands. It's what it requires. And so the left's vision of group equity necessarily comes at the cost of meritocracy. And so those would be my two reasons for opposing the view is one is it's not meritocratic, but number two is it often even has the effect of hurting the very people they claimed to have wanted to help. And I think that's part of what we're seeing in modern America.

**Lex Fridman**

Yeah, you had a pretty intense debate with Mark Cuban, a great conversation. I think it's on your podcast actually.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Yeah.

**Lex Fridman**

Yes. Yeah, it was great.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Yeah, he was a good guy to talk to.

**Lex Fridman**

It was great. Okay. Well, speaking of good guys, he messages me all the time with beautifully eloquent criticism. I appreciate that, Mark. What was one of the more convincing things he said to you? You're mostly focused on kind of DEI.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

So let's just take a step back and understand because people use these acronyms and then they start saying it out of muscle memory and stop asking what it actually means. DEI refers to capital D, diversity, equity and inclusion, which is a philosophy adopted by institutions principally in the private sector, companies, nonprofits and universities, to say that they need to strive for specific forms of racial, gender and sexual orientation diversity. And it's not just the D, it's equity in ensuring that you have equal outcomes as measured by certain group quota targets or group representation targets that they would meet in their ranks. The problem with the DEI agenda is in the name of diversity, it actually has been a vehicle for sacrificing true diversity of thought. So the way the argument goes is this, is that we have to create an environment that is receptive to minorities and minority views, but if certain opinions are themselves deemed to be hostile to those minorities, then you have to exclude those opinions in the name of the capital D diversity. But that means that you're necessarily sacrificing actual diversity of thought. I can give you a very specific example.

That might sound like, "Okay, well, is it such a bad thing if an organization doesn't want to exclude people who are saying racist things on a given day?" We could debate that. But let's get to the tangible world of how that actually plays out. I, for my part, have not really heard in ordinary America people uttering racial epithets if you're going to restaurant or in the grocery store. It's not something I've encountered, certainly not in the workplace. But that's a theoretical case, let's talk about the real world case of how this plays out. So there was an instance, it was a case that presented itself before the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the EEOC, one of the government enforcers of the DEI agenda. And there was a case of a woman who wore a red sweater on Fridays in celebration of veterans and those who had served the military and invited others in the workplace to do the same thing. And they had a kind of affinity group, you could call it that, a veteran type affinity group, appreciating those who had served. Her son had served as well. There was a minority employee at that business who said that he found that to be a microaggression. So the employer asked her to stop wearing said clothes too, the office. Well, she still felt like she wanted to celebrate, I think, it was Friday was the day of the week where they did it. She still wore the red sweater and she didn't wear it, but she would hang it on the back of her seat, put it on the back of her seat at the office. They said, "No, you can't do that either." So the irony is in the name of this capital D diversity, which is creating a supposedly welcoming workplace for all kinds of Americans by focusing only on certain kinds of so-called diversity, that translates into actually not even a diversity of your genetics, which is what they claim to be solving for, but also a hostility to diversity of thought. And I think that's dangerous. And you're seeing that happen in the last four years across this country. It's been pretty rampant. I think it leaves America worse off. The beauty of America is we're a country where we should be able to have institutions that are stronger from different points of view being expressed. But my number one criticism of the DEI agenda is not even that it's anti-meritocratic, it is anti-meritocratic, but my number one criticism is it's actually hostile to the free and open exchange of ideas by creating often legal liabilities for organizations that even permit certain viewpoints to be expressed. And I think that's the biggest concern.

### **Lex Fridman**

I think what Mark would say is that diversity allows you to look for talent in places where you haven't looked before and therefore find really special talents, special people. I think that's the case he made.

### **Vivek Ramaswamy**

He did make that case and it was a great conversation. And my response to that is great, that's a good thing. We don't need a three-letter acronym to do that. You don't need special programmatic DEI incentives to do it because companies are always going to seek in a truly free market, which I think we're missing in the United States today for a lot of reasons, but in a truly free market, companies will have the incentive to hire the best and brightest or else they're going to be less competitive versus other companies. But you don't need ESG, DEI, CSR regimes in part enforced by the government to do it. Today, to be a government

contractor, for example, you have to adopt certain racial and gender representation targets in your workforce. That's not the free market working. So I think you can't have it both ways either. It's going to be good for companies and companies are going to do what's in their self-interest. That's what capitalists like Mark Cuban and I believe. But if we really believe that, then we should let the market work rather than forcing it to adopt these top-down standards. That's my issue with it.

### **Lex Fridman**

I don't know what it is about human psychology, but whenever you have a sort of administration, a committee that gets together to do a good thing, the committee starts to use the good thing, the ideology behind wish there's a good ideal, to bully people and to do bad things. I don't know what it is.

### **Vivek Ramaswamy**

This has less to do with left-wing versus right-wing ideology and more the nature of a bureaucracy is one that looks after its own existence as its top goal. So part of what you've seen with the so-called perpetuation of wokeness in American life is that the bureaucracy has used the appearance of virtue to actually deflect accountabilities for its own failure. So you've seen that in several different spheres of American life. You could even talk about in the military. You think about our entry into Iraq after 9/11 had nothing to do with the state objectives that we had. And I think by all accounts, it was a policy move we regret. Our policy ranks and our foreign policy establishment made a mistake in entering Iraq, invading a country that really by all accounts was not at all responsible for 9/11. Nonetheless, if you're part of the US military or you're General Mark Milley, you would rather talk about white rage or systemic racism than you would actually talk about the military's actual substantive failures. It's what I call the practice of blowing woke smoke to deflect accountability. You could say the same thing with respect to the educational system. It's a lot easier to claim that, and I'm not the one making this claim, but others have made this claim, that math is racist because there are inequitable results on objective tests of mathematics based on different demographic attributes. You can claim using that then math is racist. It's a lot easier to blow that woke smoke than it is to accept accountability for failing to teach black kids in the inner city how to actually do math and fix our public school systems and the zip code coded mechanism for trapping kids in poor communities in bad schools. So I think that in many cases, what these bureaucracies do is they use the appearance of signaling this virtue as a way of not really advancing a social cause, but of strengthening the power of the bureaucracy itself and insulating that bureaucracy from criticism. So in many ways, bureaucracy, I think, cars the channels through which much of this woke ideology has flowed over the last several years. And that's why part of my focus has shifted away from just combating wokeness because that's just a symptom, I think, versus combating actual bureaucracy itself. The rise of this managerial class, the rise of the deep state. We talk about that in the government, but the deep state doesn't just exist in the government. It exists I think in every sphere of our lives, from companies to nonprofits to universities. It's

the rise of we call the managerial class, the committee class, the people who professionally sit on committees, I think are wielding far more power today than actual creators, entrepreneurs, original ideators and ordinary citizens alike.

**Lex Fridman**

Yeah, you need managers, but as few as possible. It seems like when you have a giant managerial class, the actual doers don't get to do. But like you said, bureaucracy is a phenomena of both the left and the right. This is not-

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

It's not even a left or right, it's just transcends that, but it's anti-American at its core. So our founding fathers, they were anti-bureaucratic at their core actually, they were the pioneers, the explorers, the unafraid. They were the inventors, the creators. People forget this about Benjamin Franklin who signed the Declaration of Independence, one of the great inventors that we have in the United States as well. He invented the lightning rod. He invented the Franklin stove, which was actually one of the great innovations in the field of thermodynamics. He even invented a number of musical instruments that Mozart and Beethoven went on to use. That's just Benjamin Franklin. So you think, "Oh, he's a one-off." Everybody say, okay, he was the one zany founder who was also a creative scientific innovator who happened to be one of the founders of the country. Wrong, it wasn't unique to him. You have Thomas Jefferson. What are you sitting in right now? You're sitting on a swivel chair. Okay. Who invented the swivel chair?

**Lex Fridman**

Thomas Jefferson?

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Yes, Thomas Jefferson.

**Lex Fridman**

Yeah.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Funny enough, he invented the swivel chair while he was writing the Declaration of Independence, which is insane.

**Lex Fridman**

You're the one that reminded me that he drafted, he wrote the Declaration of Independence when he was 33.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

And he was 33 when he did it while inventing the swivel chair.



**Lex Fridman**

I like how you're focused on the swivel chair. Can we just pause on the Declaration of Independence? It makes me feel horrible.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

But the Declaration of Independence part, everybody knows. What people don't know, he was an architect. So he worked in Virginia, but the Virginia State Capital Dome, so the building that's in Virginia today where the state capital is, that dome was actually designed by Thomas Jefferson as well. So these people weren't people who sat on professional committees, they weren't bureaucrats, they hated bureaucracy. Part of Old World England is Old World England was committed to the idea of bureaucracy. Bureaucracy and monarchy go hand in hand. A monarch can't actually administer or govern directly, it requires bureaucracy, a machine to actually technocratically govern for him. So the United States of America was founded on the idea that we reject that Old World view. The Old World vision was that we the people cannot be trusted to self-govern or make decisions for ourselves. We would burn ourselves off the planet, is the modern version of this, with existential risks like global climate change, if we just leave it to the people and their democratic will. That's why you need professional technocrats, educated elites, enlightened bureaucrats to be able to set limits that actually protect people from their own worst impulses. That's the Old World view and most nations in human history have operated this way, but what made the United States of America itself, to know what made America great, we have to know what made America itself, what made America itself is we said hell no to that vision, that we the people, for better or worse, are going to self-govern without the committee class restraining what we do. And the likes of Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin and I could give you examples of John Adams or Robert Livingston, you go straight down the list of founding fathers who were inventors, creators, pioneers, explorers, who also were the very people who came together to sign the Declaration of Independence. And so yeah, this rise of bureaucracy in America in every sphere of life, I view it as anti-American actually. And I hope that conservatives and liberals alike can get behind my crusade certainly to get in there and shut most of it down.

**Lex Fridman**

Yeah, speaking of shutting most of it down, how do you propose we do that? How do we make government more efficient? How to make it smaller? What are the different ideas of how to do that?

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Well, the first thing I'll say is you're always taking a risk. Okay, there's no free lunch here. Mostly, at least. You're always taking a risk. One risk is that you say I want to reform it gradually, I want to have a grand master plan and get to exactly what the right end state is and then carefully cut with a chisel, like a work of art, to get there. I don't believe that approach works. I think that's an approach that conservatives have taken for many years. I

think it hasn't gotten us very far. And the reason is if you have an eight-headed hydra and you cut off one of the heads, it grows right back. So that's the risk of not cutting enough. The other risk you could take is the risk of cutting too much. To say that I'm going to cut so much that I'm going to take the risk of not just cutting the fat, but also cutting some muscle along the way, but I'm going to take that risk. I can't give you option C, which is to say that I'm going to cut exactly the right amount, I'm going to do it perfectly. Okay, you don't know ex-ante, you don't know beforehand that it's exactly how it's going to, so that's a meaningless claim. It's only a question of which risk you're going to take. I believe in the moment we live in right now, the second risk is the risk we have to be willing to take. And we haven't had a class of politician, Donald Trump in 2016 was I think the closest we've gotten and I think the second term will be even closer to what we need, but short of that, I don't think we've really had a class of politician who has gotten very serious about cutting so much that you're also going to cut some fat, but not only some fat, but also some muscle. That's the risk we have to take. So the way I would do it, 75% headcount reduction across the board in the federal bureaucracy, send them home packing, shut down agencies that shouldn't exist, rescind every unconstitutional regulation that Congress never passed. In a true self-governing democracy, it should be our elected representatives that make the laws and the rules not unelected bureaucrats. And that is the single greatest form of economic stimulus we could have in this country, but it is also the single most effective way to restore self-governance in our country as well. And it is the blueprint for, I think, how we save this country.

### **Lex Fridman**

That's pretty gangster, 75%. There's this kind of almost meme like video of Argentinian President Javier Milei, where on a whiteboard, he has all the I think 18 ministries lined up and he's ripping, "Department of Education, gone," and he's just going like this. Now, the situation in Argentina is pretty dire and the situation in the United States is not, despite everybody saying the empire is falling, this is still, in my opinion, the greatest nation on earth. Still, the economy is doing very well. Still, this is the hub of culture, the hub of innovation, the hub of so many amazing things. Do you think it's possible to do something like firing 75% of people in government when things are going relatively well?

### **Vivek Ramaswamy**

Yes, in fact, I think it's necessary and essential. I think things depends on what your level of well really is, what you're benchmarking against. America's not built on complacency. We're built on the pursuit of excellence. And are we still the greatest nation on planet earth? I believe we are. I agree with you on that. But are we great as we could possibly be or even as we have been in the past, measured against our own standards of excellence? No, we're not. I think the nation is in a trajectory of decline. That doesn't mean it's the end of the empire yet. But we are a nation in decline right now. I don't think we have to be. But part of that decline is driven by the rise of this managerial class, the bureaucracy sucking the lifeblood out of the country, sucking the lifeblood out of our innovative culture, our culture of self-governance. So is it possible? Yeah, it's really possible. I'll tell you one easy way to do it.

This is a little bit, I'm being a little bit glib here, but I think it's not crazy, at least as a thought experiment. Get in there on day one, say that anybody in the federal bureaucracy who is not elected, elected representatives obviously were elected by the people, but the people who are not elected, if your social security number ends in an odd number, you're out, if it ends in an even number, you're in. There's a 50% cut right there. Of those who remain, if your social security number starts in an even number, you're in and if it starts with an odd number, you're out. Boom. That's a 75% reduction done. Literally, stochastically, okay, one of the virtues of that, it's a thought experiment, not a policy prescription, but one of the virtues of that thought experiment is that you don't have a bunch of lawsuits you're dealing with about gender discrimination or racial discrimination or political viewpoint discrimination. Actually, the reality is you've at mass, you didn't bring the chisel, you brought a chainsaw, I guarantee you do that on day one and do step two on day two, on day three, not a thing will have changed for the ordinary American other than this size of their government being a lot smaller and more restrained, spending a lot less money to operate it. And most people who have run a company, especially larger companies know this, it's 25% of the people who do 80 to 90% of the useful work, these government agencies are no different. So now imagine you could do that same thought experiment, but not just doing it at random, but do it still at large scale while having some metric of screening for those who actually had both the greatest competence as well as the greatest commitment and knowledge of the Constitution. That I think would immediately raise not only the civic character of the United States, now we feel, okay, the people we elect to run the government, they've got the power back, they're running the government again, as opposed to the unelected bureaucrats who wield the power today, it would also stimulate the economy. The regulatory state is like a wet blanket on the American economy. Most of it is unconstitutional. All we require is leadership with a spine to get in there and actually do what conservative presidents have maybe gestured towards and talked about, but have not really effectuated ever in modern history.

### **Lex Fridman**

And by the way, that kind of thing would attract the ultra-competent that actually want to work in government.

### **Vivek Ramaswamy**

Exactly. Which you're missing today because right now, the government would swallow them up. Most competent people feel like that bureaucratic machine will swallow them whole. You clear the decks of 75% of them, real innovators can then show up.

### **Lex Fridman**

Yeah. There's kind of this cynical view of capitals where people think that the only reason you do anything is to earn more money, but I think a lot of people would want to work in government to build something that's helpful to a huge number of people.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Yeah. Well, look, I think there's opportunities for the very best to have large scale impact in all kinds of different institutions in our universities to K through 12 education, through entrepreneurship, I'm obviously very biased in that regard. I think there's a lot you're able to create that you couldn't create through government. But I do think in the moment that we live in where our government is as broken as it is and as responsible for the declining nature of our country, yeah, I think bringing in people who are unafraid, talented and able to have an impact could make all of the difference. And I agree with you, I don't think actually most people, even most people who say they're motivated by money, I don't think are actually motivated by money. I think most people are driven by a belief that they can do more than they're being permitted to do right now with their skillsets. I've run a number of companies and one of the things that I used to ask when I was, I'm not day-to-day involved in them anymore, but as a CEO, I would ask when I did interviews, in the first company I started, at Roivant, for four years in, company was pretty big by that point, I would still intent on interviewing every candidate before they joined, screening for the culture of that person. I can talk a lot more about things we did to build that culture. But one of the questions I would always ask them naturally just to start a conversation, it's a pretty basic question, is why did you leave your last job or why are you leaving your last job? I'll tell you what I didn't hear very often, is that I wasn't paid enough. And maybe they'd be shy to tell you that during an interview, but there's indirect ways to signal that. That really wasn't at all even a top 10 reason why people were leaving their job. I'll give you what the number one reason was, is that they felt like they were unable to do the true maximum of what their potential was in their prior role. That's the number one reason people leave their job. And by the way, I would say that as I'm saying that in a self boastful way that we would attract these people. I think that's also true for most of the people who left the company as well, Roivant. And that was true at Roivant, it's at other companies I've started. I think the number one reason people join companies and number one people leave companies, whether they've been to join mine or to leave mine in the past, have been that they feel like they're able to do more than they're able to with their skillset than that environment permits them to actually achieve. And so I think that's what people hung for. When we think about capitalism and true free market capitalism, and we used words earlier like meritocracy, it's about building a system, whether it's in a nation or whether it's even within an organization, that allows every individual to flourish and achieve the maximum of their potential. And sometimes it just doesn't match for an organization, where let's say the mission is here and somebody's skillsets could be really well aligned to a different mission, then the right answer is it's not a negative thing, it's just that person needs to leave and find their mission somewhere else. But to bring that back to government, I think part of what's happened right now is that the rise of that bureaucracy in so many of these government agencies has actually obfuscated the mission of these agencies. I think if you went to most federal bureaucracies and just asked them what's the mission, I'm just making one up off the top of my head right now, the Department of Health and Human Services, what is the mission of HHS in the United States of America? I doubt somebody who works there, even the person who leads it, could give you... I doubt

somebody who works there, even the person who leads it, could give you a coherent answer to that question. I just heavily doubt it. And you could fill in the blank for any range of... Department of Commerce, and we could just go straight down the list of each of these other ones, what is the mission of this organization? You could even say for the US military, what's the purpose of the US military, the Department of Defense? I can give you one. I think it is to win wars, and more importantly, through its strength, to avoid wars, that's it. Well, okay, if that's the mission, then you know, okay, it's not tinkering around and messing around in some foreign conflict where we feel like it sometimes, and other ones where we don't. And who decides that, I don't really know, but whoever the people are that decide that, we follow those orders. No, our mission is to protect the United States of America, to win wars, and to avoid wars, boom, those three things. What does protecting the United States of America mean? Number one, the homeland of the United States of America and the people who reside there. Good, that's a clear mission. The Department of Health and Human Services, maybe, could be a reasonable mission to say that I want to make America the healthiest country on Planet Earth, and we will develop the metrics and meet those metrics, and that's the goal of the Department of HHS, to set policies, or at least to implement policies that best achieve that goal. And maybe that's the right statement of mission, maybe it's not, but one of the things that happens is, when you're governed by the committee class, it dilutes the sense of mission out of any organization, whether it's a company or government agency or bureaucracy. And once you've done that, then you lose the ability to track the best and the brightest, because in order for somebody to achieve the maximum of their potential, they have to know what it's towards. There has to be a mission in the first place. Then you're not getting the best and brightest, you get more from the committee class, and that becomes a self-perpetuating downward spiral, and that is what the blob of the federal bureaucracy really looks like today.

### **Lex Fridman**

Yeah, you said something really profound. At the individual scale of the individual contributor, doer, creator, what happens is, you have a certain capacity to do awesome shit, and then there's barriers that come up. We have to wait a little bit. This happens, there's friction always. When humans together are working on something, there's friction. And so, the goal of a great company is to minimize that friction, minimize the number of barriers. And what happens is, the managerial class, the incentive is for it to create barriers.

### **Vivek Ramaswamy**

It's what it does. That's just by the nature of a bureaucracy, it creates sand in the gears to slow down whatever the other process was. Is there some room for that somewhere in certain contexts? Sure. It's like a defensive mechanism that's designed to reduce dynamism. But I think when that becomes cancerous in its scope, it then actually kills the host itself, whether that's a school, whether that's a company, whether that's a government. And so, the way I think about it, Lex, is, there's sort of a balance of distributed power. And I don't mean power in the Foucault sense of social power, but I mean just power in the sense

of the ability to affect relevant change in any organization between what you could call the founder class, the creator class, the everyday citizen, the stakeholder class, and then the managerial class. And there's a role for all three of them. You could have the constituents of an organization, say in a constitutional republic, that's the citizen, you could have the equivalent of the creator class, the people who create things in that polity, and then you have the bureaucratic class that's designed to administer and serve as a liaison between the two. I'm not denying that there's some role somewhere for people who are in that managerial class, but right now, in this moment in American history, and I think it's been more or less true for the last century, but it's grown, starting with Woodrow Wilson's advent of the Modern Administrative State, metastasizing through FDR's New Deal and what was required to administer it, blown over and metastasizing further through LBJ's Great Society, and everything that's happened since, even aided and abetted by Republican presidents along the way like Richard Nixon, has created a United States of America where that committee class, both in and outside the government and our culture, wields far too much influence and power relative to the everyday citizen stakeholder and to the creators, who are, in many ways, constrained, hamstrung, shackled in straitjacket from achieving the maximum of their own potential contributions. And I certainly feel that myself. I probably identify as being a member of that creator class most closely. It's just what I've done, I create things. And I think we live in an environment in the United States of America where we're still probably the best country on earth where that creator has that shot, so that's the positive side of it, but one where we are far more constrictive to the creator class than we have been when we've been at our best, and that's what I want to see change.

### **Lex Fridman**

Can you steelman the perspective of somebody that looks at a particular department, Department of Education, and are saying that the amount of pain that will be caused by closing it and firing 75% of people will be too much?

### **Vivek Ramaswamy**

Yeah. So, I go back to this question of mission, right? A lot of people who make arguments for the Department of Education aren't aware why the Department of Education was created in the first place, actually. So that might be a useful place to start, is that this thing was created, it had a purpose, presumably. What was that purpose? It might be at least a relevant question to ask before we decided what are we doing with it or not, what was the purpose of this thing that we created? To me, it seems to be a highly relevant question. Yet, in this discussion about government reform, it's interesting how eager people are to skip over that question and just to talk about, "Okay, but we've got the status quo, and it's just going to be disruptive," versus asking the question of, okay, this institution was created, it had an original purpose, is that purpose still relevant? Is this organization at all fulfilling that purpose today? To me, those are some relevant questions to ask. So, let's talk about that for the Department of Education. Its purpose was relevant at that time, which was to make sure that localities, and particularly states, were not siphoning taxpayer dollars away from

predominantly Black school districts to predominantly White ones. And that was not a theoretical concern at the time. It was happening, or there was at least some evidence that that was happening in certain states in the South. And so, you may say you don't like the federal solution, you may say you like the federal solution, but like it or not, that was the original purpose of the US Department of Education, to make sure that, from a federal perspective, that states were not systematically disadvantaging Black school districts over predominantly White ones. However noble and relevant that purpose may have been six decades ago, it's not a relevant purpose today. There's no evidence today of states intentionally mapping out which are the Black versus White school districts and siphoning money in one direction versus another. To the contrary, one of the things we've learned is that the school districts in the inner city, many of which are predominantly Black, actually spend more money per student than other school districts for a worse result, as measured by test scores and other performance, on a per-student basis, suggesting that there are other factors than the dollar expenditures per school determining student success, and actually suggesting that even the over-funding of some of those already poorly run schools rewards them for their actual bureaucratic failures. So, against that backdrop, the Department of Education has, instead, extrapolated that original purpose of what was a racial equality purpose, to, instead, implement a different vision of racial equity through the ideologies that they demand in the content of the curriculum that these public schools actually teach. So, Department of Education funding, so federal funding, accounts for about, I'm giving you round numbers here, but around 10% of the funding of most public schools across the country. But that comes with strings attached. So, in today's Department of Education, this didn't happen back in 1970, but it's happening today, ironically it's funny how these things change with the bureaucracies that fail, they blow oak smoke to cover up for their own failures, what happens with today's Department of Education? They effectively say you don't get that funding unless you adopt certain goals deemed at achieving racial or gender equity goals. And in fact, they also intervene in the curriculum where there's evidence of schools in the Midwest or in the Great Plains that have been denied funding because Department of Education funding, so long as they have certain subjects like Archery... There was one instance of a school that had archery in its curriculum. I find that to be pretty interesting, actually. I think you have different kinds of physical education. This is one that combines mental focus with physical aptitude, but hey, maybe I'm biased, it doesn't matter. Whether you like archery or not, I don't think it's the federal government's job to withhold funding from a school because they include something in their curriculum that the federal government deems inappropriate where that locality found that to be a relevant locus of education. So, what you see then is an abandonment of the original purpose. That's long past. You don't have this problem that the Department of Education was originally formed to solve, of siphoning money from Black school districts to White school districts and laundering that, effectively, in public funds, that doesn't exist anymore. So, they find new purposes instead, creating a lot more damage along the way. So, you asked me to steelman, and can I say something constructive rather than just pounding down on the other side? One way to think about this is, for a lot of these agencies, were

many of them formed with a positive intention at the outset? Yes. Whether that positive intention existed, I'm still a skeptic of creating bureaucracies, but if you're going to create one, at least make it, what shall we call it, a taskforce. Make it a taskforce. A taskforce versus an agency means, after it's done, you celebrate, you've done your work, pat yourself on the back, and then move on, rather than creating a standing bureaucracy which actually finds things to do after it has already solved or addressed the first reason it was born in the first place. And I think we don't have enough of that in our culture. Even if you have a company that's generated tons of cash flow, and it's solved a problem, let's say it's a biopharmaceutical company that developed a cure to some disease, and the only thing people knew at that company was how to develop a cure to that disease, and they generated a boatload of cash from doing it, at a certain point you could just give it to your shareholders and close up shop. And that's actually a beautiful thing to do. You don't see that happen enough in the American consciousness, in the American culture of, when an institution has achieved its purpose, celebrate it, and then move on. And I think that that culture in our government would result in a vastly restrained scope of government, rather than, today it's a one-way ratchet. Once you cause it to come into existence, you cause new things to come into existence, but the old one that came into existence continues to persist and exist as well, and that's where you get this metastasis over the last century.

### **Lex Fridman**

So, what kind of things do you think government should do that the private sector, the forces of capitalism would create drastic inequalities or create the kind of pain we don't want to have in government?

### **Vivek Ramaswamy**

So, the question is, what should government do that the private sector cannot? I'll give you one. Protect our border. Capitalism, it's never going to be the job of capitalists, or never going to be the capability or inclination of capitalists to preserve a national border. And I think a nation, it's literally, I think, one of the chapters of this book, "A nation without borders is not a nation." It's almost a tautology, an open border is not a border. Capitalism is not going to solve that. What's going to solve that is a nation. Part of the job of the federal government is to protect the homeland of its nation, in this case, the United States of America. That's an example of a proper function of the federal government, to provide physical security to its citizens. Another proper role of that federal government is to look after, or in this case it could be state government, to make sure that private parties cannot externalize their costs onto somebody else without their consent. It's a fancy way economists would use to describe it. What does that mean? It means if you go dump your chemicals in somebody else's river, then you're liable for that. It's not that, okay, I'm a capitalist and so I want to create things, and I'm going to do hell or high water, whether or not that harms people around me. The job of a proper government is to make sure that you protect the rights of those who may be harmed by those who are pursuing their own rights through a system of capitalism. In seeking prosperity, you're free to do it, but if you're



hurting somebody, else without their consent, in the process, the government is there to enforce what is really just a different form of enforcing a private property right. So, I would say that those are two central functions of government, is to preserve national boundaries in the national security of a homeland, and number two is to protect and preserve private property rights and the enforcement of those private property rights. And I think, at that point, you've described about 80 to 90% of the proper role of a government.

**Lex Fridman**

What about infrastructure?

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Look, I think that most infrastructure can be dealt with through the private sector. You can get into specifics. You could have infrastructure that's specific to national security. No, I do think that military industrial base is essential to provide national security. That's a form of infrastructure. I don't think you could rely exclusively on the private sector to provide the optimal level of that protection to a nation. But interstate highways, I think you could think about whether or not that's a common good that everybody benefits from but nobody had the incentive to create. I think you could make an argument for the existence of interstate highways. I think you could also make powerful arguments for the fact that, actually, you could have enough private sector co-ops that could cause that to come into existence as well. But I'm not dogmatic about this. But broadly speaking, 80 to 90% of the goal of the federal government, I'm not going to say 100, 80 to 90% of the goal of the existence of a federal government, of government, period, should be to protect national boundaries and provide security for the people who live there, and to protect the private property rights of the people who reside there. If we restore that, I think we're well on our way to a revival of what our founding fathers envisioned, and I think many of them would give you the same answer that I just did.

**Lex Fridman**

So, if we get government out of education, would you be also for reducing this as a government in the states for something like education?

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

I think if it goes closer to municipalities and the states, I'm fine with that being a locus for people determining as... For example, let's just say school districts are taxed at the local level. For that to be a matter for municipalities and townships to actually decide, democratically, how they actually want that governed, whether it's balance between a public school district versus making that same money available to families in the form of vouchers or other forms of ability to educational savings accounts, or whichever mechanism it is, to opt out of that, if that's done locally, I'll have views on that that tend to go further in the direction of true educational choice and diversity of choice. The implementation of charter schools, the granting of state charters, or even lowering the barriers to granting one, I favor

those kinds of policies. But if we've gotten the federal government out of it, that's achieved 75% of what I think we need to achieve, that I'm focused on solving other problems, and leave that to the states and municipalities to cover from there.

**Lex Fridman**

So, given this conversation, what do you think of Elon's proposal of the Department of Government Efficiency in the Trump Administration, or really, any administration?

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Well, I'm, of course, biased because Elon and I had discussed that for the better part of the last year and a half, which I think it's a great idea. It's something that's very consistent with the core premise of my presidential candidacy. I got to know him, as I was running for US president, in a couple of events that he came to, and then we built a friendship after that. So, obviously, I think it's a great idea.

**Lex Fridman**

Who do you think is more hardcore on the cutting, you or Elon?

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Well, I think Elon's pretty hardcore. Because I said 75% of the federal bureaucrats, and while I was running for president, he said, "You need to put, 'At least 75%'." So I agree with him. I think it would be a fun competition to see who ends up more hardcore. I don't think there's someone out there who's going to be more hardcore than he or I would be. And the reason is, I think we share in common a willingness to take the risk and see what happens. The sun will still rise in the east and set in the west. That much I guarantee you. Is there are going to be some broken glass and some damage? Yes, there is. There's no way around that. But once you're willing to take that risk, then it doesn't become so scary anymore. And here's the thing, Lex, so it's easy to say this, let's talk about where the rubber hits the road here. Even in a second Trump term this would be the discussion. President Trump and I have had this conversation, but I think we would continue to have this conversation, is where does it rank on our prioritization list, because there's always going to be a trade-off. If you have a different policy objective that you want to achieve, a good policy objective, whatever that is, you could talk about immigration policy, you could talk about economic policy, there are other policy objectives, if you're going to trade off a little bit, in the short-run, the effectiveness of your ability to carry out that policy goal, if you're also committed to actually thinning out the federal government by 75%... Because there's just going to be some clunkiness there's just going to be frictional costs for that level of cut. So the question is, where does that rank on your prioritization list? To pull that off, to pull off a 75% reduction in the size and scale of the federal government, the regulatory state, and the headcount, I think that only happens if that's your top priority. You could do it at a smaller scale, but at that scale, it only happens if that's your top priority. Because then, as President, you're in a position to say, "I know in the super short run, that might even make it a little bit harder for

me to do this other thing that I want to do, and use the regulatory state to do it, but I'm gonna pass on that. I'm gonna pass that up, I'm gonna bear that hardship and inconvenience because I know this other goal is more important on the scale of decades and centuries for the country." So it's a question of prioritization. And certainly, my own view is that, now is the moment where that needs to be a top priority for saving this country. And if there's one thing about my campaign, if I was to do it again, I would be even clearer about... Actually, I talked about a lot of things in the campaign, and we can cover a lot of that too. But if there's one thing that I care about more than anything else, it's dismantling that bureaucracy. And moreover, it's an assault and a crusade on the nanny state itself. And that nanny state presents itself in several forms. There's the entitlement state, there's the welfare state, presents itself in the form of the regulatory state, that's what we're talking about, and then there's the foreign nanny state where, effectively, we are subsidizing other countries that aren't paying their fair share of protection or other resources we provide them. If I was to summarize my ideology in a nutshell, it is to terminate the nanny state in the United States of America in all of its forms; the entitlement state, the regulatory state, and the foreign policy nanny state. Once we've done that, we've revived the Republic that I think would make George Washington proud.

**Lex Fridman**

So, you mentioned Department of Education, but there's also the Department of Defense.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Yes.

**Lex Fridman**

And there's a very large number of very powerful people that have gotten used to and a budget that's increasing, and the number of wars and military conflicts that's increasing. So, if we could just talk about that.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Sure.

**Lex Fridman**

So this is the number one priority. It's like there's difficulty levels here. The DOD would be, probably, the hardest, so let's take that on. What's your view on the Military Industrial Complex, Department of Defense, and wars in general?

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

So, I think the nanny state, I'm against it overall, I'm against the foreign policy nanny state as well. Let me just start from that as the starting-off point, and then I'll tell you about my views on the DOD and our Defense. First of all, think that... And I think that it was easy for many people from the neocon school of thought to caricature my views with the media at

their side, but actually, my own view is, if it's in the interest of the United States of America to provide certain levels of protection to US allies, we can do that as long as those allies actually pay for it. And I think it's important for two reasons. The less important reason, it's still an important reason, the less important reason is, it's still money for us. It's not like we're swimming in a cash surplus right now. We've got a \$34 trillion national debt, and growing, and I think pretty soon the interest payments are going to be the largest line item in our own federal budget. So, it's not like we have money willy-nilly to just hand over for free. That's the less important reason, though. The more important reason is that it makes sure that our allies have actual skin in the game to not have skewed incentives to actually enter conflicts where they're not actually bearing the full cost of those conflicts. So, take NATO for example, most NATO countries, literally a majority of NATO countries today do not pay or contribute 2% of their GDP to their own National Defense, which is supposedly a requirement to be in NATO. So the majority of NATO countries are failing to meet their basic commitment to be in NATO in the first place. Germany particularly is, I think, arbitraging the hell out of the United States of America. And I don't think that... I'm not going to be some shrill voice here saying, "So therefore, we should not be supporting any allies or providing security blankets." No, I'm not going in that direction. What I would say is, you've got to pay for it. Pay for your fair share, A, because we're not swimming in excess money ourselves, but B, is, it tells us that you actually have skin in the game for your own Defense, which actually then makes nations far more prudent in the risks that they take, whether or not they're in a war, versus if somebody else is paying for it and somebody else is providing our security guarantee, yeah, I might as well take the gamble and see where I end up at the end of a war, versus the restraint that that imposes on the decision-making of those allies. So, now, let's bring this home to the Department of Defense. I think the top goal of the US Defense Policy establishment should be to provide for the national defense of the United States of America. And the irony is, that's what we're actually doing most poorly. Other than the Coast Guard, we're not really using the US Military to prevent crossings at our own southern border and crossings at our other borders. In fact, the United States of America, our homeland, I believe is less secure today than it has been in a very long time. Vulnerable to threats from hypersonic missiles where China and Russia... Russia certainly has capabilities in excess of that of the United States, missiles. Hypersonic means faster than the speed of sound that could hit the United States, including those carrying nuclear warheads. We are more vulnerable to super EMP attacks, Electromagnetic Pulse attacks, that could, without exaggeration, some of this could be from other nations, some of this could even be from solar flares, cause significant mass casualty in the United States of America. If the electric grid's gone, it's not exaggeration to say, if that happened, planes would be falling out of the sky because our chips really depend on those, well, will be affected by those electromagnetic pulses. More vulnerable to cyber attacks. I know people, okay, start yawning and say, "Okay, boring stuff, super EMP, cyber," or whatever. No. Actually, it is pretty relevant to whether or not you actually are facing the risk of not getting your insulin because your refrigerator doesn't work anymore or your food can't be stored or your car or your ability to fly on an airplane is impaired. So, I think that these are risks where our own

National Defense spending has been wholly inadequate. So, I'm not one of these people that says decrease versus increase National Defense spending. We're not spending it in the right places. The number one place we need to be spending it is actually protecting our National Defense, protecting our own physical homeland. And I think we actually need an increase in spending on protecting our own homeland. But that is different from the agenda of foreign interventionism and foreign nanny state-ism for its own sake, where we should expect more and demand more of our allies to provide for their own national defense and then provide the relevant security guarantees to allies where that actually advances the interest of the United States of America. So, that's what I believe. And I think this process has been corrupted by what Dwight Eisenhower famously in his farewell address called the Military Industrial Complex in the United States. But I think it's bigger than just the... I think it's easy to tell the tales of the financial corruption. It's kind of cultural corruption and conceit that just because certain number of people in that expert class have a belief, that their belief happens to be the right one because they can scare you with what the consequence would be if you don't follow their advice. And one of the beauties of the United States is, at least in principle, we have civilian control of the military. The person who we elect to be the US President is the one that actually is the true Commander in Chief. I have my doubts of whether it operates that way. I think it's quite obvious that Joe Biden is not a functioning Commander in Chief of the United States of America, yet, on paper, supposedly we're still are supposed to call him that. But at least in theory, we're supposed to have civilian control of the US Military. And I think that one of the things that that leader needs to do is to ask the question of, again, the mission. What's the purpose of this US Military in the first place? At the top of the list should be to protect the homeland and the people who actually live here, which we're failing to do. So, that's where I land on that question.

### **Lex Fridman**

Wait, okay, there's a lot of stuff to ask. First of all, on Joe Biden, do you mean he's functionally not in control of the US Military because of the age factor or because of the nature of the presidency?

### **Vivek Ramaswamy**

It's a good question. I would say, in his case it's particularly accentuated because it's both. In his case, I don't think anybody in America, anymore, believes that Joe Biden is the functioning President of the United States of America. How could he be? He wasn't even sufficiently functioning to be the candidate after a debate that was held in June. There's no way he's going to be in a position to make the most important decisions on a daily and demanding basis to protect the leading nation in the world. Now, more generally, though, I think we have a deeper problem, that even when it's not Joe Biden, in general, the people we elect to run the government haven't really been the ones running the government, it's been the unelected bureaucrats in the bureaucratic deep state underneath that's really been making the decisions. I've done business in a number of places. I've traveled to Japan. There's an interesting corporate analogy. Sometimes, if you get outside of politics, people

can, I find, listen, and pay attention a little bit more, because politics, it's so fraught right now that if you start talking to somebody who disagrees with you about the politics of it, you're just butting heads but not really making progress. So, let's just make the same point, but go outside of politics for a second. So, I was traveling Japan, I was having a late night dinner with a CEO of a Japanese pharmaceutical company. And it takes a while to really get him to open up, culturally speaking in Japan, a couple of nights of karaoke, and whatnot, maybe late night restaurant, whatever it is. Well, we built a good enough relationship where he was very candid with me. He said, "I'm the CEO of the company. I could go and find the Head of a research unit and tell him, 'Okay, this is a project we're no longer working on as a company. We don't wanna spend money on it, we're gonna spend money somewhere else.' And he'll look me in the eye and he'll say, 'Yes, sir, yes sir.' I'll come back six months later and find that they're spending exactly the same amount of money on those exact same projects. And I'll tell him, 'No, we agreed. I told you that you're not gonna spend money on this project, and we have to stop now. We should have stopped six months ago.' Get a slap on the wrist for it. He says, 'Yes, sir, I'm sorry. Yes. No, no, no, of course, that's correct.' I come back six months later, same person is spending the same money on the same project." And here's why. Historically in Japan, and I should say, in Japan, this is changing now, it's changing now, but historically, until very recently, and even to an extent now, it's near impossible to fire people. So, if somebody works for you and you can't fire them, that means they don't actually work for you. It means in some deeper, perverse sense, you work for them because you're responsible for what they do, without any authority to actually change it. So, I think most people who have traveled in Japan and Japanese corporate culture through the 1990s and 2000s and 2010s, and maybe even some vestiges in the 2020s, wouldn't really dispute what I just told you. Now, we're bringing it back to the more contentious terrain. I think that's basically how things have worked in the Executive Branch of the Federal Government of the United States of America. You have these so-called Civil Service protections on the books. Now, if you really read them carefully, I think that there are areas to provide daylight for a truly constitutionally, well-trained President to act. That's a contrary view that I have that bucks conventional wisdom. But apart from that caveat, in general, the conventional view has been, the US president can't fire these people. There's 4 million federal bureaucrats, 99.9% of them can't be touched by the person who the people who elected to run the Executive Branch can't even fire those people. It's the equivalent of that Japanese CEO. And so, that culture exists every bit as much in the federal bureaucracy of the United States of America as they did in Japanese corporate culture through the 1990s. And that's a lot of what's wrong with not just the way that our Department of Defense is run and our Foreign Policy establishment is run, but I think it applies to a lot of the Domestic Policy establishment as well. And to come back to the core point, how are we going to save this republic? This is the debate in the Conservative Movement right now. So, this is maybe a little bit spicy for some Republicans to swallow right now, and my top focus is making sure that we win the election, but let's just move the ball forward a little bit and skate to where the puck is going here, okay? Yes, let's say we win the election, all is well and dandy. Okay, what's the philosophy that determines how we govern? There's a little bit of a fork in the

road amongst Conservatives where there are those who believe that the right answer now is to use that regulatory state and use those levers of power to advance our own pro-Conservative, pro-American, pro-worker goals. And I'm sympathetic to all of those goals, but I don't think that the right way to do it is to create a Conservative regulatory state that replaces a Liberal regulatory state. I think the right answer is actually to get in there and shut it down. I don't want to replace the left-wing nanny state with a right-wing nanny state. I want to get in there and actually dismantle the nanny state. And I think it has been a long time in the United States, maybe ever in modern history, that we've had a Conservative leader at the national level who makes it their principal objective to dismantle the nanny state in all of its forms; the entitlement state, the regulatory state, and the foreign policy in nanny state. That was a core focus of my candidacy. One of the things that I wish, and this is on me, not anybody else, that I should have done better, was to make that more crystal clear as a focus without getting distracted by a lot of the shenanigans, let's just say, that happened as side-shows during a presidential campaign. But call that a lesson learned, because I do think it's what the country needs now more than ever.

**Lex Fridman**

Yeah, it's a really, really powerful idea. It's actually something that Donald Trump ran on in 2016 -

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Is to drain the swamp.

**Lex Fridman**

... drain the swamp. I think by most accounts, maybe you can disagree with me, he did not successfully do so. He did fire a bunch of people, more than usual, but-

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Can I say a word about the conditions he was operating in, because I think that's why I'm far more excited for this time around, is that a lot has changed in the legal landscape. So, Donald Trump did not have the Supreme Court backdrop in 2016 that he does today. So, there's some really important cases that have come down from the Supreme Court. One is West Virginia versus the EPA. I think it's probably the most important case of our generation. In 2022 that came down and said that if Congress has not passed a rule into law itself through the halls of Congress, and it relates to what they call a major question, a major policy or economic question, it can't be done by the stroke of a pen by a regulator, an unelected bureaucrat either. That quite literally means most federal regulations today are unconstitutional. Then, this year comes down a different big one, another big one from the Supreme Court in the Loper-Bright case, which held that, historically, for the last 50 years in this country, the doctrine has been, it's called Chevron Deference. It's a doctrine that says that federal courts have to defer to an agency... Federal courts have to defer to an agency's interpretation of the law. They now tossed that out the window and said, "No, no, no. The

federal courts no longer have to defer to an agency's interpretation of what the law actually is." The combination of those two cases is seismic in its impact for the regulatory state. There's also another great case that came down, was SEC versus Jarkesy, and the SEC is one of these agencies that embodies everything we're talking about here. The SEC, among other agencies, has tribunals inside that not only do they write the rules, not only do they enforce those rules, they also have these judges inside the agency that also interpret the rules and determine and dole out punishments. That doesn't make sense if you believe in separation of powers in the United States, so the Supreme Court put an end to that and said that that practice at the SEC is unconstitutional. Actually, as a side note, the Supreme Court has said countless practices and rules written by the SEC, the EPA, the FTC in recent years, were outright unconstitutional. Think about what that means for a constitutional republic, that supposedly, these law enforcement agencies, the courts have now said, especially this year, the courts have now said that their own behaviors actually break the law. So the very agencies entrusted with supposedly enforcing the law are actually behaving with utter, blatant disregard for the law itself. That's un-American, it's not tenable in the United States of America, but thankfully, we now have a Supreme Court that recognizes that. So whether or not we have a second Trump term, well, that's up to the voters, but even whether or not that now takes advantage of that backdrop the Supreme Court has given us to actually gut the regulatory state, we'll find out. I'm optimistic, I certainly think it's the best chance that we've had in a generation in this country, and that's a big part of why I'm supporting Donald Trump and why I'm going to do everything in my power to help him, but I do think it is going to take a spine of steel to see that through. And then after we've taken on the regulatory state, I think that's the next step, but I do think there's this broader project of dismantling the nanny state in all of its forms, the entitlement state, the regulatory state, and the foreign policy in any state. Three-word answer, if I was to summarize my worldview and my presidential campaign in three words, shut it down.

**Lex Fridman**

Shut it down. Okay, so the Supreme Court cases you mentioned, there's a lot of nuance there.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Yeah.

**Lex Fridman**

I guess it's weakening the immune system of the different departments.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Yeah. It's a good way of putting it.



**Lex Fridman**

Okay. On the human psychology level, so you basically kind of implied that for Donald Trump or for any president, the legal situation was difficult. Is that the only thing really operating?

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Probably not.

**Lex Fridman**

Isn't it also just on a psychological level just hard to fire a very large number of people. Is that what it is? Is there a basic civility and momentum going on?

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Well, I think there's one other factor. So you're right to point, the legal backdrop is a valid and understandable excuse and reason. I think there are other factors at play too. So I think there's something to be said for never having been in government, showing up there the first time, and you're having to understand the rules of the road as you're operating within them, and also having to depend on people who actually aren't aligned with your policy vision, but tell you to your face that they are. And so I think that's one of the things that I've admired about President Trump is he's actually been very open about that, very humble about that, to say that there's a million learnings from that first term that make him ambitious and more ambitious in that second term. But everything I'm talking to you about, this is what needs to happen in the country. It's not specific to Donald Trump. It lays out what needs to be done in the country. There's the next four years, Donald Trump is our last, best hope and chance for moving that ball forward. But I think that the vision I'm laying out here is one that hopefully goes even beyond just the next two or four years of really fixing a century's worth of mistakes. I think we're going to fix a lot of them in the next four years if Donald Trump's president. But if you have a century's worth of mistakes that have accumulated with the overgrowth of the entitlement state in the US, I think it's going to take probably the better part of a decade at least to actually fix them.

**Lex Fridman**

I disagree with you on both the last and the best hope. Donald Trump is more likely to fire a lot of people, but is he the best person to do so?

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

We've got two candidates, right? People face a choice. This is a relevant election. One of my goals is to speak to people who do not agree with 100% of what Donald Trump says. And I can tell them, you know what? I don't agree with a hundred percent of what he says. And I can tell you as somebody who ran against him for US President, that right now he is, when I say the last, best hope, I mean in this cycle, the last, best hope that we have for dismantling that bureaucratic class. And I think that I'm also open about the fact that this is a long run project, but we have the next step to actually take over the next few years. That's kind of

where I land on it. I mean, you talked to him I guess a few weeks ago. I saw you had a podcast with him, right?

**Lex Fridman**

Mm-hmm.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

What was your impression about his preparedness to do it?

**Lex Fridman**

My impression is his priority allocation was different than yours. I think he is more focused on some of the other topics that you are also focused on.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Border. Laser focused on.

**Lex Fridman**

And there is a tension there, just as you've clearly highlighted.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

We share the same priority with respect to the southern border, and those are near term fixes that we can hit out of the park in the first year. But at the same time, I think we got to think also on decade long time horizon. So my own view is I think that it is my conviction and belief that he does care about dismantling that federal bureaucracy, certainly more so than any Republican nominee we have had, certainly in my lifetime. But I do think that there are going to be competing schools of thought where some will say, "Okay, well, we want to create a right-wing entitlement state to shower federal subsidies on favored industries while keeping them away from disfavored industries and new bureaucracies to administer them." I don't come from that school of thought. I don't want to see the bureaucracy expand in a pro-conservative direction. I want to see the bureaucracy shrink in every direction. And I do think that, from my conversations with Donald Trump, I believe that he is well-aligned with this vision of shrinking bureaucracy, but that's a longer-term project.

**Lex Fridman**

There's so many priorities at play here, though. You really do have to do the Elon thing of walking into Twitter headquarters-

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Shut it down.

**Lex Fridman**

... with a sink. Right? Let that sink in. That basically firing a very large number of people. And it's not just about the firing, it's about setting clear missions for the different departments that remain. Hiring back because you over fire. Hiring back based on meritocracy. It's a full-time... and it's not only full-time in terms of actual time's, full-time psychologically, because you're walking into a place unlike a company like Twitter, an already successful company. In government, everybody around you, all the experts and the advisors are going to tell you you're wrong. And it's a very difficult psychological place to operate in because you're constantly the asshole. And the certainty you have to have about what you're doing is nearly infinite because everybody, all the really smart people are telling you, "No, this is a terrible idea. Sir, this is a terrible idea."

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

You have to have this spine of steel to cut through what that short-term advice is you're getting. And I'll tell you, certainly, I intend to do whatever I can for this country, both in the next four years and beyond, but my voice on this will be crystal clear and President Trump knows that's my view on it, and I believe he shares it deeply, is that all else equal, get in there and shut down as much of the excess bureaucracy as we can. Do it as quickly as possible. And that's a big part of how we save our country.

**Lex Fridman**

Okay, I'll give you an example that's really difficult. Tension, given your priorities. Immigration, there's an estimated 14 million illegal immigrants in the United States. You've spoken about mass deportation.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Yes.

**Lex Fridman**

That requires a lot of effort. Money. I mean, how do you do it and how does that conflict with the shutting it down?

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Sure. And so it goes back to that original discussion we had is what are the few proper roles of the federal government? I gave you two. Of the government, period. One is to protect the national borders and sovereignty of the United States, and two is to protect private property rights. There's a lot else. Most of what the government's doing today, both at the federal and state level, is something other than those two things. But in my book, those are the two things that are the proper function of government. So for everything else, the federal government should not be doing, the one thing they should be doing is to protect the homeland of the United States of America and the sovereignty and sanctity of our national borders. So in that domain, that's mission aligned with a proper purpose for the federal

government. I think we're a nation founded on the rule of law. I say this as the kid of legal immigrants. That means your first act of entering this country cannot break the law. And in some ways, if I was to summarize a formula for saving the country over the next four years, it would be a tale of two mass deportations. The mass deportations of millions of illegals who are in this country and should not be, and then the mass deportation of millions of unelected federal bureaucrats out of Washington D.C. Now, all else equal, could say that those are intention, but I think that the reality is anything outside of the scope of what the core function of the government is, which is protecting borders and protecting private property rights, that's really where I think the predominant cuts need to be. And if you look at the number of people who are looking after the border, it's not even 0.1% of the federal employee base today. So 75% isn't 99.99%, it's 75%. It would still be a tiny fraction of the remaining 25%, which I actually think needs to be more rather than less. So it's a good question, but that's where I land on when it's a proper role of the federal government, great. Act and actually do your job. The irony is 99.9999% of those resources are going to functions other than the protection of private property rights and the protection of our national physical protection.

**Lex Fridman**

There is a lot of criticism of the idea of mass deportation though. So one-

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Fair enough.

**Lex Fridman**

... it will cause a large amount of economic harm, at least in the short term. The other is there would be potentially violations of our higher ideals of how we like to treat human beings, in particular separation of families, for example, tearing families apart. And the other is just the logistical complexity of doing something like this. How do you answer some of those criticisms, I guess?

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Fair enough. And I would call those even, not even criticisms, but just thoughtful questions. Even to somebody who's really aligned with doing this, those are thoughtful questions to ask. So I do want to say something about this point on how we think about the breakage of the rule of law in other contexts. There are 350,000 mothers who are in prison in the United States today who committed crimes and were convicted of them. They didn't take their kids with them to those prisons either, right? So we face difficult trade-offs in all kinds of contexts as it relates to the enforcement of law. And I just want to make that basic observation against the backdrop of if we're a nation founded on the rule of law, we that there are trade-offs to enforcing the law, and we've acknowledged that in other contexts. I don't think that we should have a special exemption for saying that somehow we weigh the other way when it comes to the issue of the border. We're a nation founded in the rule of

law. We enforce laws, that has costs, that has trade-offs, but it's who we are. And the easiest fact I can cite is 350,000 or so mothers who are in prison and did not take their kids to prison with them. Is that bad? Is it undesirable for the kids to grow up without those 350,000 mothers? It is, but it's a difficult situation created by people who violated the law and faced the consequences of it, which is also a competing and important priority in the country. So that's in the domestic context. As it relates to this question of mass deportations, let's just get very practical because all that was theoretical. Very practically, there's ways to do this. Starting with people who have already broken the law, people who have not just broken the law of entering but are committing other crimes while already here in the United States. That's a clear case for an instant mass deportation. You have a lot of people who haven't integrated into their communities. You think about the economic impact of this, a lot of people are in detention already. A lot of those people should be immediately returned to their country of origin, or at least what is called a safe third country. So safe third country means even if somebody's claiming to seek asylum from political persecution, well, move them to another country that doesn't have to be the United States of America that they passed through, say, Mexico before actually coming here. Other countries around the world are doing this. Australia is detaining people. They don't let them out and live a normal, joyful life because they came to the country. They detain them until their case is adjudicated. Well, the rates of fraud in Australia, of what people lie about, what their conditions are, is way lower now than in the United States because people respond to those incentives. So I think that in some ways, people make this sound much bigger and scarier than it needs to be. I feel we're taking a deeply pragmatic approach, and the North Star for me is I want the policy that helps the United States citizens who are already here. What's that policy? Clearly, that's going to be a policy that includes a large number of deportations. I think by definition, it's going to be the largest mass deportation in American history. Sounds like a punchline at a campaign rally, but actually, it's just a factual statement that says if we've had the by far largest influx of illegal immigrants in American history, it just stands to reason, it's logic that, okay, if we're going to fix that, we're going to have the largest mass deportation in American history. And we can be rational. Start with people who are breaking the law in other ways here in the United States. Start with people who are already in detention or entering detention now. That comes at no cost and strict benefit. There isn't even a little bit of an economic trade-off. Then you get to areas where you would say, okay, the costs actually continue to outweigh the benefits, and that's exactly the way our policy should be guided here. I want to do it in as respectful and as humane of a manner as possible. The reality is, I think one of the things we got to remember, I'll give you the example I gave with the Haitian case in Springfield, town that I spent a lot of time in growing up in Ohio. I live about an hour from there today. I don't blame the individual Haitians who came here. I'm not saying that they're bad people because in that particular case, those weren't even people who broke the law in coming here. They came as part of a program called Temporary Protective Status. Now, the operative word there was the first one, "temporary". There have been all kinds of lawsuits for people who, even 8, 10, 12, 14 years after the earthquake in Haiti where many of them came, when they're going to be removed,

there are allegations of racial discrimination or otherwise. No. Temporary protective status means it's temporary, and we're not abandoning the rule of law when we send them back, we're abandoning the rule of law when we let them stay. Now, if that has a true benefit to the United States of America, economically or otherwise, go through the paths that allow somebody to enter this country for economic reasons, but don't do it through asylum-based claims or Temporary Protected Status. I think one of the features of our immigration system right now is it is built on a lie and it incentivizes lying. The reason is the arguments for keeping people in the country, if those are economic reasons but the people actually entered using claims of asylum or refugee status, those two things don't match up. So just be honest about what our immigration system actually is. I think we do need dramatic reforms to the legal immigration system to select purposely for the people who are going to actually improve the United States of America. I think there are many people, I know some of them. I gave a story of one guy who I met who is educated at our best universities or among our best universities. He went to Princeton. He went to Harvard Business School. He has a great job in the investment community. He was a professional tennis player. He was a concert pianist. He could do a Rubik's cube in less than a minute. I'm not making this stuff up. These are hard facts. He can't get a green card in the United States. He's been here for 10 years or something like this. He asked me for the best advice I could give him. I unfortunately could not give him the actual best advice, which would be to just take a flight to Mexico and cross the border and claim to be somebody who is seeking asylum in the United States. That would have been morally wrong advice, so I didn't give it to them. But practically, if you were giving him advice, that would be the best advice that you actually could give somebody, which is a broken system on both sides. People who are going to make those contributions to the United States and pledge allegiance to the United States and speak our language and assimilate, we should have a path for them to be able to add value to the United States. Yet they're not the ones who are getting in. Our immigration system selects for people who are willing to lie. That's what it does. Selects for people who are willing to say they're seeking refugee status or seeking asylum when in fact, they're not. And then we have policymakers who lie after the fact using economic justifications to keep them here. But if it was an economic justification, that should have been the criteria you used to bring them in the first place, not this illusion of asylum or refugee status. There was a case, actually, even the New York Times reported on this, believe it or not, of a woman who came from Russia fleeing Vladimir Putin's intolerant, anti-LGBTQ regime. She was fleeing persecution by the evil man, Putin. She came here and eventually when she was pressed on the series of lies, it came out that, and she was crying finally, when she broke down and admitted this, she was like, "I'm not even gay. I don't even like gay people." That's what she said. And yet she was pretending to be some sort of LGBTQ advocate who was persecuted in Russia when in fact, it was just somebody who was seeking better economic conditions in the United States. I'm not saying you're wrong to seek better economic conditions in the United States, but you are wrong to lie about it, and that's what you're seeing a lot of people, even in this industry of quote, unquote, tourism to the United States, they're having their kids in the United States. They go back to their home country, but their

kids enjoy birthright citizenship. That's built on a lie. You have people claiming to suffer from persecution. In fact, they're just working in the United States and then living in these relative mansions in parts of Mexico or Central America after they've spent four or five years making money here. Just abandon the lie. Let's just have an immigration system built on honesty. Just tell the truth. If the argument is that we need more people here for economically filling jobs, I'm skeptical the extent to which a lot of those arguments actually end up being true. But let's have that debate in the open rather than having it through the back door saying that it's refugee and asylum status when we know it's a lie, and then we justify it after the fact by saying that that economically helps the United States. Cut the dishonesty. And I just think that that is a policy we would do well to expand every sphere. We talk about from the military industrial complex to the rise of the managerial class, to a lot of what our government's covered up about our own history to even this question of immigration today. Just tell the people the truth, and I think our government would be better serving our people if it did.

### **Lex Fridman**

Yeah, in the way you describe eloquently, the immigration system is broken in that way that is built fundamentally on lies. But there's the other side of it. Illegal immigrants are used in political campaigns for fearmongering, for example. So what I would like to understand is what is the actual harm that illegal immigrants are causing? So one of the more intense claims is of crime, and I haven't studied this rigorously, but the surface level studies all show that legal and illegal immigrants commit less crime than US born citizens.

### **Vivek Ramaswamy**

I think it's true for legal immigrants. I think it's not true for illegal immigrants.

### **Lex Fridman**

That's not what I saw.

### **Vivek Ramaswamy**

And this is part of why I wrote this book and the book is called Truths. So better darn well have well-sourced facts in here. Can't be made up Hypotheses, hard truths. And there's a chapter where, even in my own research on it, Lex, I know a lot about this issue from my time as a presidential candidate, but even in writing the chapter on the border here, I learned a lot from a lot of different dimensions and some of which even caused me to revise some of my premises going into it, okay. My main thesis in that chapter is forget the demonization of illegal or legal immigrants or whatever, as you put it, fearmongering. Just put all that to one side. I want an immigration system that is built on honesty. Identify what the objective is. We could debate the objective. We might have different opinions on the objectives. Some people may say the objective is the economic growth of the United States. I air that argument in this book, and I think that that's insufficient, personally. Personally, I think the United States is more than just an economic zone. It is a country. It is

a nation bound together by civic ideals. I think we need to screen not just for immigrants, who are going to make economic contributions, but those who speak our language, those who are able to assimilate and those who share those civic ideals and know the US history even better than the average US citizen who's here. That's what I believe. But even if you disagree with me and say, "No, no, the sole goal is economic production in the United States," then at least have an immigration system that's honest about that rather than one which claims to solve for that goal by bringing in people who are rewarded for being a refugee, we should reward the people in that model, which I don't even think should be the whole model. But even if that were your model, reward the people who have demonstrably proven that they would make economic contributions to the United States, not the people who have demonstrated that they're willing to lie to achieve a goal. And right now, our immigration system, if it rewards one quality over any other, if there's one parameter that it rewards over any other, it isn't civic allegiance to the United States, it isn't fluency in English, it isn't the ability to make an economic contribution to this country. The number one human attribute that our immigration system rewards is whether or not you are willing to lie. And the people who are telling those lies about whether they're seeking asylum or not are the ones who are most likely to get in. And the people who are most unwilling to tell those lies are the ones who are actually not getting in. That is a hard, uncomfortable truth about our immigration system. And the reason is because the law says you only get asylum if you're going to face bodily harm or near-term risk of bodily injury based on your religion, your ethnicity, or certain other factors. And so when you come into the country, you're asked, "Do you fulfill that criteria or not?" And the number one way to get into this country is to check the box and say yes. So that means just systematically, imagine if you're a university, Harvard or Yale or whatever, you're running your admissions process, the number one attribute you're selecting for isn't your SAT score, it isn't your GPA, it isn't your athletic accomplishments. It's whether or not you're willing to lie on the application. You're going to have a class populated by a bunch of charlatans and frauds. That's exactly what our immigration system is doing to the United States of America, is it is literally selecting for the people who are willing to lie. Let's say you have somebody who's a person of integrity says, "Okay, I want a better life for my family, but I want to teach my kids that I'm not going to lie or break the law to do it." That person is infinitely less likely to get into the United States. I know it sounds provocative to frame it that way, but it is not an opinion. It is a fact that that is the number one human attribute that our current immigration system is selecting for. I want an immigration system centered on honesty. In order to implement that, we require acknowledging what the goals of our immigration system are in the first place. And there we have competing visions on the right, okay? Amongst conservatives, there's a rift. Some conservatives believe, I respect them for their honesty, I disagree with them, believe that the goal of the immigration system should be to, in part, protect American workers from the effects of foreign wage competition. That if we have immigrants, it's going to bring down prices and we need to protect American workers from the effects of that downward pressure on wages. It's a goal. It's a coherent goal. I don't think it's the right goal, but many of my friends on the right believe that's a goal, but at least it's honest. And then we can design



an honest immigration system to achieve that goal if that's their goal. I have other friends on the right that say the sole goal is economic growth, nothing else matters. I disagree with that as well. My view is the goal should be whatever enriches the civic quality of the United States of America. That includes those who know the language, know our ideals, pledge allegiance to those ideals, and also are willing to make economic contributions to the country, which is one of our ideals as well. But whatever it is, we can have that debate, I have a very different view. I don't think it's a proper role of immigration policy to make it a form of labor policy because the United States of America is founded on excellence, we should be able to compete. But that's a policy debate we can have. But right now, we are not even able to have the policy debate because the whole immigration policy is built on not only a lie, but on rewarding those who do lie. And that's what I want to see change.

**Lex Fridman**

Just to linger a little bit on the demonization and to bring Ann Coulter into the picture, which I recommend people should listen to your conversation with her, I haven't listened to her much, but she had this thing where she's clearly admires and respects you as a human being. And she's basically saying. You're one of the good ones. And this idea that you had this brilliant question of what does it mean to be an American? And she basically said, "Not you, Vivek." But she said, "Well, maybe you, but not people like you." So that whole kind of approach to immigration, I think is really anti-meritocratic fundamentally.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Maybe even anti-American.

**Lex Fridman**

Anti-American, yeah.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

So I want to confront this directly because it is a popular current on the American right. And the reason I'm not picking on Ann Coulter specifically is I think actually it's a much more widely shared view, and I just give her at least credit for willing to articulate it, a view that the blood and soil is what makes for your American identity or genetic lineage. And I just reject that view, I think it's anti-American. I think what makes for an American identity is your allegiance, your abiding allegiance to the founding ideals of this country and your willingness to pledge allegiance to those ideals. So those are two different views. I think that there is a view on the American right right now that says that we're not a creedal nation, that our nation's not about a creed. It's about a physical place and a physical homeland. I think that view fails on several accounts. Obviously, every nation has to have a geographic space that it defines its own. So obviously we are, among other things, a geographic space. But the essence of the United States of America, I think is the common creed, the ideals that hold that common nation together. Without that, a few things happen. First of all, American exceptionalism becomes impossible. And I'll tell you why. Every other

nation is also built on the same idea. Most nations have been built on common blood and soil arguments, genetic stock. Italy or Japan would have a stronger national identity than the United States in that case, because they have a much longer standing claim on what their genetic lineage really was. The ethnicity of the people is far more pure in those contexts than in the United States. So that's the first reason. American exceptionalism becomes impossible. The second is there's all kinds of contradictions that then start to emerge. Your claim on American identity is defined based on how long you've been here. Well, then the Native Americans would have a far greater claim of being American than somebody who came here on the Mayflower or somebody who came here afterwards. Now, maybe that blood and soil view is, no, no, it's not quite the Native Americans. You only have to start at this point and end at this point. So on this view of blood and soil identity, it has to be okay, you couldn't have come before a certain year, then it doesn't count. But if you came after a certain year, it doesn't count either. That just becomes highly unconvincing as a view of what American national identity actually is. Versus my view that American national identity is grounded on whether or not you pledge allegiance to the ideals codified in the Declaration of Independence and actualized in the US Constitution. And it's been said, some of my friends on the right have said things like, people will not die for a set of ideals. People won't fight for abstractions or abstract ideals. I actually disagree with that. The American Revolution basically disproves that. The American Revolution was fought, for anything, over abstract ideals that said that, you know what? We believe in self-governance and free speech and free exercise of religion. That's what we believe in the United States, which is different from Old World England. So I do think that there is this brewing debate on the right, and do I disagree like hell with Ann Coulter on this? Absolutely. And did I take serious issue with some of the things she told me? Absolutely. But I also believe that she had the stones to say, if I may say it that way, the things that many on the right believe but haven't quite articulated in the way that she has. And I think we need to have that debate in the open. Now, personally, I think most of the conservative movement actually is with me on this, but I think it's become a very popular counter in the other direction to say that your vision of American identity is far more physical in nature. And to me, I think it is still ideals-based in nature. And I think that that's a good debate for the future for us to have in the conservative movement. And I think it's going to be a defining feature of what direction the conservative movement goes in the future.

**Lex Fridman**

Quick pause. Bathroom break?

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Yeah.

**Lex Fridman**

Let me ask you to, again, steel man the case for and against Trump. So my biggest criticism for him is the fake electors scheme, the 2020 election, and actually the 2020 election in the

way you formulate it in the Nation of victims is just the entirety of that process, instead of focusing on winning, doing a lot of whining. I like people that win, not whine, even when the refs are biased in whatever direction.

### **Vivek Ramaswamy**

So look, I think the United States of America, I preach this to the left, I preach it to my kids, we got to accept it on our own side too, we're not going to save this country by being victim, we're going to save this country by being victorious. And I don't care whether it's left-wing victimhood, right-wing victimhood. I'm against victimhood culture. The number one factor that determines whether you achieve something in life is you. I believe that. It's not the only factor that matters. There's a lot of other factors that affect whether or not you succeed. Life is not fair, but I tell my kids the same thing. The number one factor that determines whether or not you succeed in achieving your goal is you. If I tell it to my kids and I preach it to the left, I'm going to preach that to our own side as well. Now, that being said, that's just a philosophy, okay? That's a personal philosophy. You asked me to do something different, and I'm always a fan. The standard I hope that people hold me to when they read this book as well, is I try to do that in this book, is to give the best possible argument for the other side. You don't want to give some rinky-dink argument for the other side and knock it down. You want to give the best possible argument for the other side and then offer your own view or else you don't understand your own. So you asked me what's the strongest case against Donald Trump? Well, I ran for US President against Donald Trump. So I'm going to give you what my perspective is. I think it's nothing of what you hear on MSNBC or from the left attacking him to be a threat to democracy. I think all of that's actually nonsense. I actually think it is, if you were making that case, and he has my full support as you know, but if you were making that case, I think for many voters who are of the next generation, they're asking a question about, "How are you going to understand the position that I'm in as a member of a new generation?" The same criticism they had of Biden, they could say, "Oh, well, are you too old? Are you from a different generation that's too far removed from my generation's concerns?" And I think that that's in many ways a factor that was weighing on both Trump and Biden. But when they played the trick of swapping out Joe Biden, it left that issue much more on the table for Donald Trump. So you're asking me to steel man it, that's what I would say is that when I look at what's the number one issue that I would need to persuade Independent voters of to say that, no, no, no, this is still the right choice is even though the other side claims to offer a new generation of leadership, here's somebody who is one of the older presidents we will have had who was elected. How do we convince those people to vote from? That's what I would give you in that category.

### **Lex Fridman**

Right. But I get it. And you share a lot of ideas with Donald Trump. So I get when you're... And you share a lot of ideas with Donald Trump, so I get when you're running for president that you would say that kind of thing, but there's other criticism you could provide, and again, on the 2020 election.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Let me ask you, you spoke to Donald Trump recently, what's your top objection to potentially voting for Donald Trump, and let me see if I can address that?

**Lex Fridman**

The 2020 election, and not in the... What is it? TDS objection. It's just I don't think there's clear definitive evidence that there was voter fraud.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Let me ask you about a different area.

**Lex Fridman**

Hold on a second. Hold on a second, hold on a second. I think there's a lot of interesting topics about the influence of media, of tech, and so on, but I want a president that has a good, clear relationship with the truth and knows what truth is, what is true, and what is not true. And moreover, I want a person who doesn't play victim, like you said, who focuses on winning and winning big, and if they lose, walk away with honor and win bigger next time, or channel that into growth and winning in some other direction. So, just the strength of being able to give everything you got to win and walk away with honor if you lose, and everything that happened around 2020 election, it just goes against that, to me.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

So I'll respond to that.

**Lex Fridman**

Sure.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Obviously, I'm not the candidate, but I'm going to give you my perspective nonetheless. I think we have seen some growth from Donald Trump over that first term in the experience of the 2020 election, and you hear a lot of that on the campaign trail. I heard a lot of that even in the conversation that he had with you. I think he is more ambitious for that second term than he was for that first term, so I thought that was the most interesting part of what you just said is, you're looking for somebody who has growth from their own experiences. Say what you will, I have seen, personally I believe, some meaningful level of personal growth and ambition for what Donald Trump hopes to achieve for the country in the second term that he wasn't able to, for one reason or another, COVID, you could put a lot of different things on it, but in that first term. Now, I think the facts of the backdrop of the 2020 election actually really do matter. I don't think you can isolate one particular aspect of criticizing the 2020 election without looking at it holistically. On the eve of the 2020 presidential election, we saw a systematic, bureaucratically, and government-aided suppression of probably the single most important piece of information released in the eve

of that election, the Hunter Biden laptop story, revealing potentially a compromised US presidential candidate, his family was compromised by foreign interests, and it was suppressed as misinformation by every major tech company. The New York Post had its own Twitter account locked at that time, and we now know that many of the censorship decisions made in the year 2020 were actually made at behest of US bureaucratic actors in the deep state threatening those tech companies to do it or else those tech companies would face consequence. I think it might be the most undemocratic thing that's happened in the history of our country, actually, is the way in which government actors, who were never elected to the government, used private sector actors to suppress information on the eve of an election that based on polling afterwards likely did influence the outcome of the 2020 presidential election. That was election interference of the highest order. So I think that that's just a hard fact that we have to contend with, and I think a lot of what you've heard in terms of complaints about the 2020 election, whatever those complaints, oh, have been, take place against the backdrop of large technology companies interfering in that election in a way that I think did have an impact on the outcome. I personally believe if the Hunter Biden laptop story had not been suppressed and censored, Donald Trump would've been unambiguous... The President of the United States right now would be Donald Trump. No doubt about it in my mind if you look at polling before and after the impact that would've had on the independent voter. Now you look at... Okay, let's talk about constructive solutions because I care about moving the country forward. What is a constructive solution to this issue of concerns about election integrity? Here's one. Single-day voting on election day as a national holiday with paper ballots and government-issued voter ID to match the voter file. I favor that. We do it even in Puerto Rico, which is a territory of the United States. Why not do that everywhere in the United States? And I'll make a pledge. I'll do it right here, right? My pledge is, as a leader in our movement, I will do everything in my power to make sure we are done complaining about stolen elections if we get to that simple place of basic election security measures. I think they'd be unifying too. Make election day a national holiday that unites us around our civic purpose one day, single-day voting on election day as a national holiday with paper ballots and government-issued voter ID to match the voter file. Let's get there as a country, and you have my word, I will lead our movement in whatever way I can to make sure we are done complaining about stolen elections and fake ballots. And I think that fact that you see resistance to that proposal, which is otherwise very practical, very reasonable, nonpartisan proposal, I think the fact of that resistance actually provokes a lot of understandable skepticism, understandable skepticism of what else is actually going on, if not that, what exactly is going on here?

### **Lex Fridman**

Well, I agree with a lot of things you said. Probably disagree, but it's hard to disagree with a Hunter Biden laptop story whether that would've changed the results in the election.

### **Vivek Ramaswamy**

We can't know obviously.

**Lex Fridman**

Right.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

I looked at some post-election polling about the views that would've had and I can't prove that to you, but that's my instinct, it's my opinion.

**Lex Fridman**

I think that's just one example, maybe a sexy example of a bias in the complex of the media and there's bias in the other direction too, but probably there's bias. It's hard to characterize bias as one of the problems.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Let me ask you one question about... Bias is one thing, bias in reporting. Censorship is another. So I would be open-minded to hearing an instance, and if I did hear it, I would condemn it, of the government systematically ordering tech companies to suppress information that was favorable to Democrats, suppress that information to lift up Republicans. If there was an instance that we know of government bureaucrats that were ordering technology companies covertly to silence information that voters otherwise would've had to advantage Republicans at the ballot box to censor it, I would be against that, and I would condemn that with equal force as I do to the suppression of the Hunter Biden laptop story suppression, and censorship of the origin of COVID-19, all happened in 2020. These are hard facts. I'm not aware of one instance. If you are aware of one, let me know because I would condemn it.

**Lex Fridman**

Most people in tech companies are privately... Their political persuasion is on the left, and most journalists, majority of journalists, are on the left, but to characterize the actual reporting and the impact of the reporting in the media and the impact of the censorship is difficult to do, but that's a real problem, just like we talked about a real problem in immigration.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

But there's two different problems, I just want to sort them out, right? I have problem with both. You talked about two issues, and I think both are important, but they're different issues. One is bias in reporting. One is censorship of information. So bias in reporting, I felt certainly, the recent presidential debate moderated by ABC was biased in the way that it was conducted, but that's a different issue from saying that voters don't get access to information through any source. So, this Hunter Biden laptop story, we now know that it contains evidence of foreign interference in potentially the Biden administration and their family's incentive structure. That story was systematically suppressed. So, in the United States of America, if you wanted to find that on the internet through any major social media

platform or through even Google search, that story was suppressed or downplayed algorithmically that you couldn't see it. Even on Twitter, if you tried to send it via direct message, the equivalent of email, sending a peer-to-peer message, they blocked you from even being able to send that story using private messages. That is a different level of concern. That's not bias at that point. That's outright interference in the election. Let's do a thought experiment here. Let's suppose that Russia orchestrated that. What would the backlash be? Let's say the Russian government orchestrated the US election. They interfered in it by saying that tech companies... They worked with them covertly to stop US citizens from being able to see information on the eve of an election. There would be a mass uproar in this country if the Russian government orchestrated that. Well, if actors in the US government bureaucracy or the US technology industry bureaucracy orchestrated the same thing, then we can't apply a different standard to say that if Russia did it, it's really bad and interfered in our election. But if it happened right here in the United States of America... And by the way, they blamed Russia for it, falsely, on the Russian disinformation of the Hunter Biden laptop story that was a false claim. We have to apply the same standard in both cases, and so the fact that if that were Russian interference, it would've been an outcry, but now it happened domestically, and we just call that, "Hey, it's a little bit of bias ahead of an election." I don't think that that's a fair characterization of how important that event was.

### **Lex Fridman**

Okay, so the connection of government to platform should not exist. The government, FBI, or anybody else should not be able to pressure platforms to censor information. Yes, we could talk about Pavel Durov and the censorship there. There should not be any censorship, and there should not be media bias, and you're right to complain if there is media bias, and we can lay it out in the open and try to fix that system. That said, the voter fraud thing, you can't right a wrong by doing another wrong. If there's some shitty shady stuff going on in the media and the censorship complex, you can't just make shit up. You can't do the fake electors scheme, and then do a lot of shady, crappy behavior during January 6th and try to shortcut your way just because your friend is cheating at Monopoly when you're playing Monopoly. You can't cheat. You shouldn't cheat yourself. You should be honest and with honor and use your platform to help fix the system versus cheat your way.

### **Vivek Ramaswamy**

So, here's my view, has any US politician ever been perfect throughout the course of American history? No, but if you want to understand the essence of what was going around in 2020, the mindset of the country? We had a year where people in this country were systematically locked down, told to shut up, sit down, do as they're told unless they're BLM or Antifa rioters, in which case it's perfectly fine for them to burn cities down. We were told that we're going to have an election, a free and fair election, and then they were denied information systematically heading into that election, which was really important, and in this case, damning information about one of the parties. And then you tell these people that

they still have to continue to shut up and comply. That creates, I think, a real culture of deep frustration in the United States of America. And I think that the reaction to systematic censorship is never good. History teaches us that it's not good in the United States. It's not good in other points in the history of the United States. The reaction to systematic, coordinated censorship and restraints and the freedom of a free people is never good. And if you want to really understand what happened, one really wants to get to the bottom of it rather than figuring out who to point fingers at, that really was the essence of the national malaise at the end of 2020 is, it was a year of unjust policies including COVID-19 lockdowns, systematic lies about it, lies about the election that created a level of public frustration that I think was understandable. Now, the job of leaders is to how do you channel that in the most productive direction possible, and to your question, to the independent voter out there evaluating, as you are, do I think that Donald Trump has exhibited a lot of growth based on his experience in his first term, and what he hopes to achieve in his second term? The answer is, absolutely yes, and so, even if you don't agree with everything that he's said or done in the choice ahead of us in this election, I still believe he's unambiguously the best choice to revive that sense of national pride, and also prosperity in our country, so people aren't in the condition where they're suffering at behest of government policies that leave them angry and channel that anger in other unproductive ways. No, the best way to do it is actually, actions do speak louder than words, implement the policies that make people's lives better, and I do think that that's the next step of how we best save the country.

### **Lex Fridman**

Are you worried if in this election, it's a close election, and Donald Trump loses by a whisker, that there's chaos that's unleashed, and how do we minimize the chance of that?

### **Vivek Ramaswamy**

I don't think that that's a concern to frame narrowly in the context of Donald Trump winning it or losing it by whisker, this is a man, who in the last couple of months, in span of two months, has faced two assassination attempts. We're not talking about theoretical attempts. We're talking about gunshots fired. That is history changing in the context of American history. We haven't seen that in a generation, and yet now that has become normalized in the US, so do I worry we're skating on thin ice as a country? I do. I do think it is a little bit strange to obsess over our concerns, national or media concerns, over Donald Trump when, in fact, he's the one on the receiving end of fire from assailants who reportedly are saying exactly the things about him that you hear from the Democratic machine. And I do think that it is irresponsible, at least for the Democratic Party to make their core case against Donald Trump. It was Joe Biden's entire message for years that he's a threat to democracy and to the existence of America. Well, if you keep saying that about somebody against the backdrop conditions that we live in as a country, I don't think that's good for a nation. And so, do I have concerns about the future of the country? Do I think we're skating on thin ice? Absolutely. And I think the best way around it is really through it, through it in this election, win by a landslide. I think a unifying landslide could be the best thing that



happens for this country, like Reagan delivered in 1980 and then again in 1984. And in a very practical note, a landslide minus some shenanigans, is still going to be a victory. That is how we unite this country. And so, I don't think 50.001 margin where cable news is declaring the winner six days after the election, I don't think that's going to be good for the country. I think a decisive victory that unites the country, turns the page on a lot of the challenges of the last four years, and says, "Okay, this is where we're going. This is who we are, and what we stand for." This is a revival of our national identity and revive national pride in the United States regardless of whether you're a Democrat or Republican. That I think is achievable in this election too, and that's the outcome I'm rooting for.

### **Lex Fridman**

So just to pile on, since we're still manning the criticism against Trump, is the rhetoric... I wish there was less of, although at times it is so ridiculous, it is entertaining, I hate Taylor Swift type of tweets or truths or whatever. I don't think that's-

### **Vivek Ramaswamy**

He's a funny guy. The reality is different people have different attributes. One of the attributes for Donald Trump is, he's one of the funnier presidents we've had in a long time. That might not be everybody's cup of tea. Maybe different people don't want... That's not a quality they value in their president. I think at a moment where you're also able to make... I will say this much is, everybody's got different styles. Donald Trump's style is different from mine. But I do think that if we're able to use levity in a moment of national division, in some ways, I think right now is probably a role where really good standup comedians could probably do a big service to the country if they're able to laugh at everybody 360 degrees, so they can go up there and make fun of Donald Trump all they want, do it in a lighthearted manner that loves the country, do the same thing to Kamala Harris with an equal standard. I think that's actually good for the country. But I think I'm more interested, Lex, as you know, in discussing the future direction of the country, my own views. I was a presidential candidate who ran against Donald Trump, by the way, and is supporting him now. But I just prefer engaging on the substance of what I think each candidate's going to achieve for the country rather than picking on really the personal attributes of either one, right? I'm not criticizing Kamala Harris's manner of laugh, or whatever one might criticize as a personal attribute of hers that you may hear elsewhere. And I just think our country's better off if we have a focus on both the policies, but also, who's going to be more likely to revive the country, that I think is a healthy debate headed to an election. Everybody has their personality attributes, their flaws, what makes them funny and lovable to some people, makes them irritating to others, I think that that matters less heading into an election.

### **Lex Fridman**

I love that you do that. I love that you focus on policy and can speak for hours on policy. Let's look at foreign policy.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Sure.

**Lex Fridman**

What kind of peace deal do you think is possible, feasible, optimal in Ukraine? If you sat down, you became president. If you sat down with Zelenskyy and sat down with Putin, what do you think is possible to talk to them about? One of the hilarious things you did, which were intense and entertaining, your debates in the primary, but anyway, is how you outgrow the other candidates that didn't know any regions. They wanted to send money and troops, and lead to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people, and they didn't know any of the regions in Ukraine. You had a lot of zingers in that one. But anyway, how do you think about negotiating with world leaders about what's going on there?

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Yeah, so look, let's just get the self-interest of each party on the table, and to be very transparent about it. From everyone's perspective, they think the other side is the aggressor, or whatever. Just get it on the table. Russia is concerned about NATO shifting the balance of power away from Russia to Western Europe when NATO has expanded far more than they expected to, and frankly, that Russia was told that NATO was going to expand. It's an uncomfortable fact for some in America, but James Baker made a commitment to Mikhail Gorbachev in the early nineties, where he said NATO would expand not one inch past East Germany. Well, NATO has expanded far more after the fall of the USSR than it did during the existence of the USSR, and that is a reality we have to contend with. That's the Russian perspective. From the Western perspective, the hard fact is Russia was the aggressor in this conflict, crossing the boundaries of a sovereign nation, and that is a violation of international norms, and it's a violation of the recognition of international law of nations without borders are not a nation. And so, against that backdrop, what's the actual interest of each country here? I think if we're able to do a reasonable deal that gives Russia the assurances it needs about what they might allege as NATO expansionism violating prior commitments, but get codified commitments for Russia, that we're not going to see willy-nilly behavior of just randomly deciding they're going to violate the sovereignty of neighboring nations and have hard assurances and consequences for that. That's the beginnings of a deal. But then, I want to be ambitious for the United States. I want to weaken the Russia-China alliance, and I think that we can do a deal that requires, that gives some real gifts to Russia conditioned on Russia withdrawing itself from its military alliance with China. And this could be good for Russia too, in the long run, because right now, Vladimir Putin does not enjoy being Xi Jinping's little brother in that relationship. But Russia's military combined with China's naval capacity, and Russia's hypersonic missiles, and China's economic might, together those countries in an alliance pose a real threat to the United States. But if as a condition for a reasonable discussion about where different territories land, given what's occupied right now, hard requirements that Russia remove its military presence from the Western hemisphere. People forget this, Cuba, Venezuela,

Nicaragua, we don't want a Russian military presence in the Western hemisphere. That too, would be a win for the United States, no more joint military exercises with China off the coast of the Aleutian Islands. The kinds of wins that the United States wants to protect the West's security, get Russia out of the Western hemisphere, certainly out of the North American periphery, and then also make sure that Russia's no longer in that military alliance with China, in return for that, able to provide Russia some things that are important to Russia. We'd have to have a reasonable discussion about what the territorial concessions would be at the end of this war to bring it to peace and resolution and what the guarantees are to make sure that NATO is going to not expand beyond the scope of what the United States has at least historically guaranteed. That I think together would be a reasonable deal that gives every party what they're looking for, that results in immediate peace, that results in greater stability, and most importantly, weakening the Russia-China Alliance, which I think is the actual threat that we have so far, no matter who in this debate of more or less Ukraine funding has really failed to confront, that I think is the way we de-escalate the risk of World War III, and weaken the threats to the West by actually dismantling that alliance.

**Lex Fridman**

So from the American perspective, the main interest is weakening the alliance between Russia and China.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Yes, I think the military alliance between Russia and China represents the single greatest threat we face. So, do a deal that's very reasonable across the board but one of the main things we get out of it is weakening that alliance, so no joint military exercises, no military collaborations. These are monitorable attributes. If there's cheating on that, we're going to immediately have consequences as a consequence of their cheating. But we can't cheat on our own obligations that we would make in the context of that deal as well.

**Lex Fridman**

There might be some extremely painful things for Ukraine here. So Ukraine currently captured a small region in Russia, the Kursk region, but Russia has captured giant chunks, Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson regions, so it seems given what you're laying out, it's very unlikely for Russia to give up any other regions that's already captured.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

I actually think that that would come down to the specifics of the negotiation. But the core goals of the negotiation are peace in this war, weaken the Russia-China Alliance. And for Russia, what do they get out of it? Part of this is... Here's something that's not negative for Ukraine but that could be positive for Russia as part of that deal because it's not a zero-sum game alone with Ukraine on the losing end of this. I think reopening economic relations with the West would be a big win for Russia, but also a carrot that gets them out of that military relationship with China. So I do think that the foreign policy establishment has historically

been, at the very least, unimaginative about the levers that we're able to use. Actually, I was a little bit critical of Nixon earlier in this discussion for his contribution to the overgrowth of the US entitlement state and regulatory state, but I'll give Nixon credit here on a different point, which is that he was imaginative of being able to pull red China out from the clasp of the USSR. He broke the China-Russia alliance back then, which was an important step to bring us to the near end of the Cold War. So I think there's an opportunity for similar unconventional maneuver now of using greater reopened economic relations with Russia to pull Russia out from the hands of China today. There's no skin off Ukraine's back for that, and I do think that's a big carrot for Russia in this direction. I do think that will involve some level of territorial negotiation as well, that out of any good deal, not everyone's going to like a hundred percent of what comes out of it, but that's part of the cost of securing peace is that not everyone's going to be happy about every attribute. But I could make a case that an immediate peace deal is also now in the best interest of Ukraine. Let's just rewind the clock. We're looking at now, let's just say we're early 2022, maybe June of 2022, Zelenskyy was ready to come to the table for a deal back then until Boris Johnson traveled when he had his own domestic political travails to convince Zelenskyy to continue to fight. And that goes to the point where when nations aren't asked to pay for their own national security, they have what the problem is of moral hazard, of taking risks that really are suboptimal risks for them to take because they're not bearing the consequences of taking those risks, not fully in the cost. If Ukraine had done a deal back then, I think it is unambiguous that they would've done a better deal for themselves than they're doing now after having spent hundreds of billions of dollars and expended tens of thousands of Ukrainian lives. So the idea that Ukraine is somehow better off because it failed to do that deal before is a lie. And if we're not willing to learn from those mistakes of the recent past, we're doomed to repeat them again. So, this idea that it would be painful for Ukraine, you know what's been painful, tens and tens and tens of thousands of people continuing to die without any increased leverage in actually getting the outcome that they want. So, I think there's an opportunity for a win-win-win, a win for the United States and the West more broadly in weakening the Russia-China alliance, a win for Ukraine in having an agreement that is backstopped by the United States of America's interests that provides a greater degree of long-run security to the future existence of Ukraine and its sovereignty and also stopping the bloodshed today. And I think a win for Russia which is to reopen economic relations with the West and have certain guarantees about what the mission-creep or scop-creep of NATO will be. There's no rule that says that when one party, before full outright World War, starts at least, there's an opportunity for there to actually be a win for everybody on the table rather than to assume that a win for us is a loss to Russia, or that anything positive that happens for Russia is a loss for the United States or Ukraine.

### **Lex Fridman**

Just to add to the table some things that Putin won't like, but I think are possible to negotiate, which is Ukraine joining the European Union and not NATO, so establishing some economic relationships there, and also splitting the bill, guaranteeing some amount of

money from both the Russia and the United States for rebuilding Ukraine. One of the challenges in Ukraine, a war-torn country, is how do you guarantee the flourishing of this particular nation, right? So, you want to not just stop the death of people and the destruction but also provide a foundation on which you can rebuild the country and build a flourishing future country.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Out of this conversation alone, there are a number of levers on the table for negotiation in a lot of different directions, and that's where you want to be, if there's only one factor that matters to each of the two parties, and those are their red line factors, then there's no room for negotiation. This is a deeply complicated, historically intricate dynamic between Ukraine and Russia, and between NATO and the United States, and the Russia-China Alliance, and economic interests that are at issue combined with the geopolitical factors. There are a lot of levers for negotiation, and the more levers there are, the more likely there is to be a win-win-win deal that gets done for everybody. So I think it should be encouraging the fact that there are as many different possible levers here, almost makes certain that a reasonable practicable peace deal as possible in contrast to situation where there's only one thing that matters for each side, then I can't tell you that there's a deal to be done, there's definitely a deal to be done here, and I think that it requires real leadership in the United States playing hardball, not just with one side of this, not just with Zelenskyy or with Putin, but across the board hardball for our own interest, which are the interests of stability here, and that that will happen to well serve both Ukraine and Russia in the process.

**Lex Fridman**

If you were president, would you call Putin?

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Absolutely, in any negotiation, you got to manage when you're calling somebody and when you're not, but I do believe that open conversation and the willingness to have that as another lever in the negotiation is totally fair game.

**Lex Fridman**

Okay, let's go to the China side of this. The big concern here is that the brewing cold, or God forbid, hot war between the United States and China and the 21st century. How do we avoid that?

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

So a few things. One is, I do think, the best way we also avoid it is by reducing the consequences to the United States in the event of that type of conflict because, at that point, what you're setting up for, if the consequences are existential for the United States, then what you're buying yourself in the context of what could be a small conflict is an all-out great war. So, the first thing I want to make sure we avoid is a major conflict between the

United States and China, like a world-war-level conflict. And the way to do that is to bring down the existential stakes for the US. And the way we bring down the existential stakes for the US, is make sure that the United States does not depend on China for our modern way of life. Right now, we do, okay, so right now, we depend on China for everything from the pharmaceuticals in our medicine cabinet, 95% of ibuprofen, one of the most basic medicines used in the United States, depends on China for its supply chain. We, depend on China, ironically, for our own military-industrial base. Think about how little sense that makes actually. Our own military, which supposedly exists to protect ourselves against adversaries, depends for its own supplies, semiconductors, and otherwise, on our top adversary, that doesn't make sense. Even if you're a libertarian in the school of Friedrich von Hayek, who somebody I admire as well, even then, you would not argue for a foreign dependence on adversary for your military. So, that's the next step we need to take, is at least reduce US dependence on China for the most essential inputs for the functioning of the United States of America, including our own military. As a side note, I believe that means not just on-shoring to the United States. It does, but if we're really serious about that, it also means expanding our relationships with allies like Japan, South Korea, India, the Philippines. And that's an interesting debate to have because some on the right would say, "Okay, I want to decouple from China, but I also want less trade with all these other places." You can't have both those things at the same time. You can have one or the other. You can't have both. And so, we have to acknowledge and be honest with ourselves that there are trade-offs to declaring independence from China. But the question is, what are the long-run benefits? Now, you think about the other way to do this is strategic clarity. I think the way that you see World Wars often emerge is strategic ambiguity from two adversaries who don't really know what the other side's red line is or isn't, and accidentally crosses those red lines. And I think we need to be much clearer with what are our hard red lines and what aren't they. And I think that's the single most effective way to make sure this doesn't spiral into major world war. And then, let's talk about ending the Russia-Ukraine conflict on the terms that I just discussed with you before. Weakening the Russia-China Alliance not only reduces the risk that Russia becomes an aggressor, it also reduces the risk that China takes the risks that could escalate us to World War III as well. So I think that geopolitically, you got to look at these things holistically, that end of the Russia-Ukraine war in that peace deal deescalates not only the Russia-Ukraine conflict but the risk of a broader conflict that includes China as well, by also weakening China. ... of a broader conflict that includes China as well by also weakening China because Russia also has hypersonic missiles and missile capabilities that are ahead of that China's. If Russia is no longer in the military alliance with China, that changes China's calculus as well. So that's kind of I think, more strategic vision we need in our foreign policy than we've had since certainly the Nixon era. I think that you need people who are going to be able to challenge the status quo, question the existing orthodoxies, the willingness to use levers to get great deals done that otherwise wouldn't have gotten done. And that's why I do think someone like Donald Trump in the presidency, and obviously I ran for president as an outsider and a businessman as well. I think this is an area, our foreign policy is one where we actually benefit from having

business leaders in those roles rather than people who are shackled by the traditional political manner of thinking.

**Lex Fridman**

I think the thing you didn't quite make clear, but I think implied is that we have to accept the red line that China provides of the one China policy.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Both sides need to have their red lines, both sides need to have their red line. So we can get into specifics, but it's going to vary depending on the circumstances. But the principle that I would give you is that we have to have a hard red line that's clear. I think that that hard red line, and I was clear during my campaign on this, so I'll say it again, is I think that we have to have a clear red line that China will not and should not for any time in the foreseeable future, annex Taiwan. I do think that for the United States, it probably is prudent right now not to suddenly upend the diplomatic policy we've adopted for decades of what is recognizing the one China policy in our position of quiet deference to that. And understand that that may be the red line is the national recognition of Taiwan as an independent nation would be a red line that China would have. But we would have a red line to say that we do not in any circumstance tolerate the annexation by physical force and anytime in the foreseeable future when that's against the interest of the United States of America. So those are examples, but the principle here is you asked how do we avoid major conflict with China? I think it starts with clear red lines on both sides. I think it starts with also lowering the stakes for the United States by making sure we're not dependent on China for our modern way of life. And I think it also starts with ironically using a peaceful resolution to the Ukraine war as a way of weakening the Russia-China alliance, which in the other direction of weakening China has significant benefits to us as well.

**Lex Fridman**

But what are you do when china says very politely, "We're going to annex Taiwan whether you like it or not."

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Against the backdrop that I just laid out, that's not going to happen. That wouldn't happen if we actually make sure that we are crystal clear about what our red lines and priorities are. We're also dependent on Taiwan right now for our own semiconductor supply chain. So China knows that's going to draw us into serious conflict in that circumstance. So against the backdrop of clearly drawn red lines against the backdrop of Russia no longer automatically being in China's camp, that's a big lever. I think also strengthening our relationship with other allies where we have room to strengthen those relationships, like India. And I'm not just saying that because my name is Vivek Ramaswamy, right? I'm saying it because it's strategically important to the United States to understand that God forbid, in a conflict scenario, China would perceive some risk to the Indian Ocean or the Andaman Sea

no longer being reliable for getting Middle Eastern oil supplies. There's a lot of levers here, but I think that if we are both strategically clear with our allies and with our adversaries about what our red lines are, what our priorities are, reasonable deals that pull Russia out of the hands of China and vice versa, reasonable allies and relationships that cause China to question whether it can continue to have the same access to Middle Eastern oil supplies as it does today. And then clear red lines with China itself about what we definitely aren't okay with and understand that they may have certain red lines to, that allows us, I think to still avoid what many people will call the unavoidable conflict, the Thucydides trap against the circumstance of when there's a rising power against the backdrop of a declining power conflict always becomes inevitable. That's a theory. It's not a law of physics and I don't think that, A, we have to be a declining power, and B, I don't think that that has to necessarily result in major conflict with China here. It's going to require real leadership, leadership with a spine and you don't have to judge based on international relations theory to form your view on this. Four years under Trump, we didn't have major conflicts in the Middle East, in places like Russia, Ukraine. We were on the cusp of war with North Korea when Obama left office and Trump took over. Four years under Biden, less than four years under Biden and Harris, what do you have? Major conflicts in the Middle East. Major conflict in Russia, Ukraine, judged by the results. And I mean I would say that even if you're somebody who disagrees with a lot of Donald Trump and you don't like his style, if you're single issues, you want to stay out of World War III, I think there's a pretty clear case for why you go for Trump in this election.

### **Lex Fridman**

So Prime Minister Modi, I think you've complimented him in a bunch of different directions, one of which is when you're discussing nationalism.

### **Vivek Ramaswamy**

Yeah, I believe that someone I've gotten to know actually reasonably well for example, recently is Giorgia Meloni, who's a leader of Italy, told her the same thing. One of the things I love about her as a leader of Italy is that she does not apologize for the national identity of the country and that she stands for certain values uncompromisingly and she doesn't give a second care about what the media has to say about it. One of the things I love last time I spoke to her when she was in the US when we sat down was she talked about she doesn't even read the newspaper, she doesn't read and watch the media and it allows her to make decisions that are best for the people. And there are elements of that in Modi's approach as well, which I respect about him, is he doesn't apologize for the fact that India has a national identity and that the nation should be proud of it. But I'm not saying that because I'm proud of Meloni or Modi for their own countries. I'm American. I think there are lessons to learn from leaders who are proud of their own nation's identity rather than apologizing for it. And I think it's a big part of, it's why I ran for president on a campaign centered on national pride. It's also why I'm not only voting for but actively supporting Donald Trump because I do think he's going to be the one that restores that missing national pride in the United States. And I



touch on this as well in the book, there's a chapter here, it says, "Nationalism isn't a bad word." I think nationalism can be a very positive thing if it's grounded in the actual true attributes of a nation. And in the United States that doesn't mean no nationalism because that was not what the national identity of the United States was based on in the first place. But a civic nationalism grounded in our actual national ideals, that is who we are. And I think that that is something that we've gotten uncomfortable with in the countries to say that, "Oh, I'm proud of being American and I believe in American exceptionalism." Somehow that's looking down on others. No, I'm not looking down on anybody, but I'm proud of my own country. And I think Modi's revived that spirit in India in a way that was missing for a long time, right? India had an inferiority complex, a psychological inferiority complex, but now to be proud of its national heritage and its national mythmaking and its national legacy and history. And to say that every nation does have to have a kind of mythmaking about its past and to be proud of that, it's like Malcolm X actually said this here in the United States, he said, "A nation without an appreciation for its history is like a tree without roots, it's dead." And I think that that's true not just for the United States, I think it's true for every other nation. I think leaders like Meloni in Italy, leaders like Modi in India have done a great job that I wish to bring that type of pride back in the United States. And whatever I do next, Lex, I'll tell you this is I think reviving that sense of identity and pride, especially in the next generation is one of the most important things we can do for this country.

### **Lex Fridman**

Speaking of what you do next, any chance you run in 2028?

### **Vivek Ramaswamy**

Well, I'm not going to rule it out. I mean that's a long time from now and I'm most focused on what I can do in the next chapter for the country. I ran for president, a million things that I learned from that experience that you can only learn by doing it. It was very much a fire first aim later when getting into the race. There was no way I could have planned and plotted this out as somebody who was coming from the outside. I was 37 years old, came from the business world, so there was a lot that only could learn by actually doing it and I did, but I care about the same things that led me into the presidential race and I don't think the issues have been solved. I think that we have a generation that is lost in the country. It's not just young people. I think it's all of us in some ways are hungry for purpose and meaning at a time in our history when the things that used to fill that void in our heart, they're missing. And I think we need a president who both the right policies for the country seal the border, grow the economy, stay out of World War III, end rampant crime. Yes, we need the right policies, but we also need leaders who in a sustained way revive our national character, revive our sense of pride in this country, revive our identity as Americans, and I think that that need exists as much today as it did when I first ran for president. I don't think it's going to be automatically solved in just a few years. I think Donald Trump is the right person to carry that banner forward for the next four years. But after that, we'll see where the country is headed into 2028 and whatever I do, it'll be whatever has a maximal positive impact on the

country. I'll also tell you that my laser focus maybe as distinct from other politicians on both sides is to take America to the next level, to move beyond our victimhood culture, to restore our culture of excellence. We got to shut down that nanny state, the entitlement state, the regulatory state, the foreign policy nanny state, shut it down and revive who we really are as Americans, and I'm as passionate about that as ever. But the next step is not running for president. The next step is what happens in the next four years, and that's why over the next four weeks I'm focused on doing whatever I can to make sure we succeed in this election.

### **Lex Fridman**

Well, I hope you run because this was made clear on the stage in the primary debates. You have a unique clarity and honesty in expressing the ideas you stand for and it would be nice to see that. I would also like to see the same thing on the other side, which would make for some badass, interesting debates.

### **Vivek Ramaswamy**

I would love nothing more than a kick-ass set of top-tier Democrat candidates. After four years of Donald Trump, we have a primary filled with actually people who have real visions for the country on both sides, and the people of this country can choose between those competing visions without insult or injury being the way. I would love nothing more than to see that in 2028.

### **Lex Fridman**

Who do you think? So for me, I would love to see in some kind of future where it's you versus somebody like Tim Walz. So to Tim Walz, maybe I'm lacking in knowledge, is first of all, a good dude, has similar to you, strongly held if not radical ideas of how to make progress in this country. So to just be on stage and debate honestly about the ideas, there's a tension between those ideas. Is there other people? Shapiro's interesting also.

### **Vivek Ramaswamy**

I would like to take on in earnest, in civil but contested context of a debate. Who do we want to take on? You want to take on somebody who disagrees with you but still has deep ideology of their own. I think John Fetterman is pretty interesting, right? He's demonstrated himself to be somebody who is thoughtful, able to change his mind on positions, but not in some sort of fake flip-floppity, flippity-floppity way. But in a thoughtful evolution, somebody's been through personal struggles, somebody who I deeply disagree with on a lot of his views and most of his views. But who I can at least say he comes across at least as somebody who has been through that torturous process of really examining your beliefs and convictions and has when necessary, been able to preach to his own tribe where he thinks they're wrong. I think it's interesting. I think that you have in a number of other leaders probably emerging at lower levels on the left. Not everybody's going to necessarily come from Washington DC. In fact, the longer they're there, the more they in some ways get polluted by it. I think the governor of Colorado, he's an interesting guy. He's got a more

libertarian tendency. I don't know as much about his views on it from a national perspective, but it's intriguing to see somebody who has at least libertarian freedom-oriented tendencies within the Democratic Party. I think that there are a number of, I mean, I don't foresee him running for president, but I had a debate last year when I was running for president with Ro Khanna who say what you will about him. He's an highly intelligent person and is somebody who is at least willing to buck the consensus of his party when necessary. I think he recently, I would say lambasted, he phrased it very delicately, but criticized Kamala Harris's proposed tax on unrealized capital gains. So I like people who are willing to challenge the orthodoxies in their own party because it says they actually have convictions. And so whoever the Democrats put up, I hope it's someone like that. And for my part I have and continue to have beliefs that will challenge Republicans, that on the face of it may not be the policies that poll on paper as the policies you're supposed to adopt as a Republican candidate, but what a true leader does doesn't just tell people what they want to hear. You tell people what they need to hear and you tell people what your actual convictions are. And this idea that I don't want to create a right-wing entitlement state or a nanny state, I want to shut it down. That challenges the precept positions of where a lot of the conservative movement is right now. I don't think the bill to cap credit card interest rates is a good idea because that's a price control just like Kamala Harris's price controls and it'll reduce access to credit. I don't think that we want a crony capitalist estate showering private benefits on selected industries that favor us or that we want to expand the CFPB or the FTC's remit, and somehow we're going to trust it because it's under our watch. No, I believe in shutting it down. That challenges a lot of the current direction of the conservative movement. I believe in certain issues that, or maybe even outside the scope of what Republicans currently care about right now. One of the things that I oppose, for example, is this is not a top issue in American politics, but just to give you a sense for how I think and view the world, I'm against factory farming of a large scale of, you could sort of say putting the mistreatment of, it's one thing to say that you need it for your sustenance and that's great. But it's another to say that you have to do it in a factory farming setting that gives special exemptions from historical laws that have existed that are the product of crony capitalism. I'm against crony capitalism in all its forms. I'm against the influence of mega money in politics. I don't think that's been good either for Democrats or Republicans. Some of those views I think are not necessarily the traditional Republican orthodoxy reading chapter and verse from what the Republican Party platform has been. It's not against the Republican Party platform, but it's asking what the future of our movement is.

### **Lex Fridman**

Some of these things are hard, like getting money out of politics.

### **Vivek Ramaswamy**

Getting mega money, getting mega money.

**Lex Fridman**

The mega money. Yeah, yeah, yeah. And so long as it exists, you got to play the game. I mean, if you're going to play to win, I think one of the things I realized is that you just can't compete without it, but you want to win the game in order to change the game. And I think that that's something that I keep in mind as well. You have written a lot, you're exceptionally productive. But even just looking book-wise written basically a book a year for the last four years. When you're writing, when you're thinking about how to solve the problems of the world to develop your policy, how do you think?

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

I need quiet time, extended periods of it that are separated from the rush of the day to day or the travel actually think a lot better when I'm working out and physically active. So if I'm running, playing tennis, lifting, somehow for me, that really opens up my mind and then I need a significant amount of time after that with a notebook. Usually carry around a notebook everywhere I go and write it down in there.

**Lex Fridman**

Is the notebook full of chaotic thoughts or is it structured? Does it-

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Sometimes it's chaotic, sometimes it's structured. It's a little bit of both. Sometimes I have a thought that I know I don't want to forget later, I'll immediately jot it down. Other times on the flight over here, I had a much more structured layout of, I got a lot of different projects in the air, for example, and I cross pollinate, I was in the shower this morning, had a bunch of thoughts, collected those on my plane ride over here. So I think that writing is something in all of its forms that helps me. It's one of the things actually helped me this year was actually writing this book. You're going through a presidential campaign, you're going at super speed. And if I was to do the presidential campaign again, the thing I would do is actually to take more structured breaks. I don't mean breaks isn't just like vacations, but I mean breaks to reflect on what's actually happening. Probably the biggest mistake I made is last time around heading into the first debate, I was like in nine different states over seven days. I would've just taken that as a pause where halfway through you've established relevance, now make sure the country sees who you actually are in full rather than just the momentum competitive driven version of you. And I just think that taking those moments to just take stock of where you are, do some writing. I didn't do much writing during the presidential campaign. I enjoy writing. It's part of how I center myself. It's part of what this book allowed me to do is, okay, I ran that whirlwind of a campaign. The first thing I started doing after I collected myself for a couple of weeks was take the pen and start writing. And I was committed to writing that book. Whether or not anybody read it, I was just writing it for myself. And actually it started in a very different form. It was very personal reflection oriented. So most of that, funny enough I've learned about writing the books, Lex, is-

**Lex Fridman**

Just edit it out.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

It just didn't end up in the book because it went in a different direction than what's interesting for a publisher to publish. And so for each of my books, the things that I started writing ended up never in the book anyway, just because the topic ended up morphing. But the journey that led me to write this book, a lot of it in this book is still in there. This is my fourth book in four years. You're right. And I hope it's the most important one, but it is certainly the product of an honest reflection that whatever it might do for the reader, it helped me to write it. And I think that's one of the things that I learned from this campaign is not just all the policy lessons, but even just as a matter of personal practice, the ability to take spaces of time to not only physically challenge yourself, work out, et cetera, but to give yourself the space to reflect, to recenter yourself on the why. Had I done that, I think I would've been even more centered on the mission the whole time. Rather than you get attacked on the way you're thrown off your tilt or thrown off your balance, it becomes a lot harder for someone else to do that to you if you've really centered yourself on your own purpose. It's probably one of my biggest learnings.

**Lex Fridman**

So you've mentioned the first primary debate, so more than almost basically anybody I've ever seen you step into some really intense debates, And you're on podcasts in general in all kinds of walks of life, whether it's debates with sort of protestors or debates with people that really disagree with you, like the radical opposite of you. What's the philosophy behind that, and what's the psychology of being able to be calm through all of that, which you seem to be able to do.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Well, I enjoy debate and for me, I think just in ordinary life, forget about a formal debate setting. Whenever I've received criticism or a contrary view, my first impulse is always, "Are they right?" I mean it's always a possibility, right? And most of the time what happens is you understand the other side's argument, but you emerge with a stronger conviction in your own belief, you know your own beliefs better if you can state the best argument for the other side, but sometimes you do change your mind, and I think that that's happened over the course of my life as well. I think no one's a thinking human being unless that happens once in a while too. And so anyway, just the idea of the pursuit of truth through open debate and inquiry, that's always just been part of my identity, part of who I am. I'm wired that way. I thrive on it, I enjoy it. Even my relationships with my closest friends are built around heated debates and deep-seated disagreements. And I just think that's beautiful, not just about human relationships, but it's particularly beautiful about America, right? Because it's part of the culture of this country more so than other countries in China, India, Asian cultures even a lot of European cultures are very different where that's considered not genteel behavior.

It's not the respectful behavior. Whereas for us, part of what makes this country great is you could disagree like hell and still get together at the dinner table at the end of it. I think we've lost some of that, but I'm on a bit of a mission to bring that back. And so whether it's in politics or not, I'm committed in that next step, whatever the path is over the next four years, one of the things I'm committed to doing is making sure that I go out of my way to talk to people who actually disagree with me. And I think it's a big part of how we're going to save our country.

**Lex Fridman**

Are they right? Is a thing I actually literally see you do. So you are listening to the person.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

For my own benefit, to be honest, selfish.

**Lex Fridman**

You also don't lose your shit. So you don't take it personally. You don't get emotional, but you get emotional sort of in a positive way. You get passionate, but you don't get... I've never seen you broken to where they get you outraged, probably because you just love the heat.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

I love the heat and I'm a curious person, so I'm always curious about what's motivating the person on the other side. That curiosity I think is actually the best antidote because if you're just trying to stay calm in the face of somebody attacking you, that's kind of fake. But if you're kind of curious about them, genuinely just wondering, I think most people are good people inherently. We all maybe get misguided from time to time, but what is it that's moving that person to go in such a different direction than you? I think as long as you're curious about that, I mean the climate change protestors that have interrupted my events, I'm as fascinated by the psychology of what's moving them and what they might be hungry for as I am concerned about rebutting the content of what they're saying to me. And I think that that's certainly something I care to revive. We don't talk about in politics that much, but reviving that sense of curiosity I think is in a certain way, one of the ways we're going to be able to disagree, but still remain friends and fellow citizens at the end of it.

**Lex Fridman**

I agree with you. I think fundamentally most people are good. And one of the things I love most about humans is the very thing you said, which is curiosity. I think we should lean into that.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

You're a curious person. I know this podcast is basically born of your curiosity, I'm sure. And so I just think we need more of that in America that kind of... Remember when I talked about our founding fathers, we were joking about it, but they were inventors, they were writers,

they were political theorists, they were founders of a nation. They kind of had that boundless curiosity too. And I think part of what's happened culturally in the countries we've gotten to this place where we've been told that, "Stay in your lane. You don't have an expert degree in that, therefore you can't have an opinion about it." I don't know. I think it's a little bit un-American in terms of the culture of it. And yeah, it's one of the things I like about you and why I was looking forward to this conversation too, is it's cool to have intellectual interests that span sports to culture, to politics, to philosophy. And it's not like you just have to be an expert trained in one of those things to be able to engage in it, but actually maybe, just maybe you might even be better at each of those things because you're curious about the other, the Renaissance man, if you will. I think we've lost a little bit of that concept in America, but it's certainly something that is important to me. And this year it's been kind of cool. After leaving the campaign, I've been doing a wide range of things. I've been picking up my tennis game again. I practiced at the Ohio State-

**Lex Fridman**

You're damn good at tennis. I was watching you-

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

I used to be better, but I'm picking it up again.

**Lex Fridman**

Somebody online was trying to correctly, I think you shot a very particular angle of that video. I think they were criticizing your backhand was weak potentially because you're-

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

That would be fair criticism. But it's gotten better again. It's gotten better recently. I've been playing, I've been practicing with the Ohio State team in the morning. They're like number one in the country or close to it. Now the guys on the team play, but there's a couple coaches who were recently on the team, one of whom used to be, a guy used to play within the juniors who invited me out. So I hit with them in the mornings alongside the team. My goal-

**Lex Fridman**

Oh, don't say it.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

I should be careful here. Oh no, my hips are telling others, so I've been playing so many days a week -

**Lex Fridman**

No, no, please don't.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

- that I set a goal for myself to play in a particular tournament, but we'll see if that happens or not.

**Lex Fridman**

No, no.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

But regardless if it's been fun to get back into tennis, I was an executive producer in a movie, something I've never done before. It was called City of Dreams. It's about a story of a young man who was trafficked into the United States. It's a thriller, it's a very cool movie to be a part of. I have actually started a couple companies, one company in particular that I think is going to be significant this year, guiding some of the other businesses that I've gotten off the ground in the past. So for me, I'm re-energized now where I was involved in the thick of politics for a full year there. And getting a little bit of oxygen outside of politics, doing some things in the private sector has actually given me a renewed sense of energy to get back into driving change through public service.

**Lex Fridman**

Well, it's been fun watching you do all these fascinating things, but I do hope that you have a future in politics as well, because it's nice to have somebody that has rigorously developed their ideas and is honest about presenting them and is willing to debate those ideas out in public space. So I would love for you and people like you to represent the future of American politics. So Vivek, thank you so much. For every time I'm swiveling this chair, I'm thinking of Thomas Jefferson.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

It's good. That was my goal.

**Lex Fridman**

So big shout out to Thomas Jefferson for the swivel chair, and thank you so much for talking today, Vivek. This was fun.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Thank you, man. One final fact on Thomas Jefferson, whether you cut this or not.

**Lex Fridman**

Of course.



**Vivek Ramaswamy**

He wrote 16,000 essays in his life, letters, right? So he said, "I've written four books in four years." That is nothing compared to how prolific this guy was. Anyway, anyway, good stuff, man. Thanks for having me.

**Lex Fridman**

Neither of us will ever live up to anything close to Thomas Jefferson.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

I love your curiosity, man. Thanks for reading the book and appreciated your feedback on it as well. And hopefully we'll do this again sometime.

**Lex Fridman**

Yep. Thank you brother.

**Vivek Ramaswamy**

Thanks dude.

**Lex Fridman**

Thanks for listening to this conversation with Vivek Ramaswamy. To support this podcast, please check out our sponsors in the description. And now let me leave you with some words from George Orwell. "Political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind." Thank you for listening and hope to see you next time.