

Transcript – Policy 360 Episode 87 – Madeleine Albright

[Judith Kelley:](#) Hello and welcome to Policy 360. I'm Judith Kelley, Dean of the Sanford School of Public Policy at Duke University. It's my great pleasure to welcome Madeleine Albright to the program. Dr. Albright served as the 64th U.S. Secretary of State under president Bill Clinton, and president Obama awarded her the nation's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2012. Secretary Albright's latest book is a number one New York bestseller, Fascism, A Warning. Welcome to Policy 360.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) It's wonderful to be with you Dean, thank you.

[Judith Kelley:](#) In your book, you describe asking a group of your graduate students at Georgetown two questions, what is real fascism and how does one recognize a practitioner? How did they respond, and to you, what is fascism?

[Madeleine Albright:](#) Well, fascism is actually hard to define, because people throw the term around. Anybody you disagree with is a fascist. It's not an ideology, it is a process. With the students, we talked about what the definitions were. And it is when a leader identifies himself with one group at the expense of another, so that the minority is really not only ignored, but often scapegoated about things. It is-- instead of trying to deal with the problems of society by finding some common answers, a fascist divides the society. So that is one of the definitions. The other is when the leader has absolutely no respect for laws and for institutional structures. When in fact, the press is viewed as the enemy of the people. It's some behavioral aspects that are how a dictatorial leader actually takes power. It's a process. Fascism is a process.

[Judith Kelley:](#) When you say it's about identifying with one group over the other, is that always in your mind ethnic or can it be political groups?

[Madeleine Albright:](#) It can be different groups.

[Judith Kelley:](#) Right.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) It's mostly ethnic, nationalist, linguistic or something, but it can be any group, and that's why it's hard to define. It's basically majority rule with no minority rights. When it goes that extra step of blaming that minority for whatever the problems are, then it gets even more virulent.

[Judith Kelley:](#) What do you think are the biggest examples we have of fascism today?

[Madeleine Albright:](#) Today, and this is the part that's very troubling, because these particular leaders were all elected. Hungary, I think is ...

[Judith Kelley:](#) As they were historically, by the way.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) They were, but I think I try hard not to actually call somebody a fascist, but more kind of what path they're on in terms of this authoritarian dictatorial aspect.

[Judith Kelley:](#) Right.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) Actually, the only person that I have called a fascist is Kim Jong-un, the leader of North Korea, because he in fact, has added to the things that I said, that he has terrified his people, has used violence, he has killed people around him, including his relatives. He's the only one.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) But I do think that in terms of trends, the Hungarian leader, Viktor Orbán, Philippine Duterte, Maduro in Venezuela, Erdoğan in Turkey. Those are the major ones. I'm concerned about what's happening in Poland, but mostly those are ... By the way, I also do think that leftist communists are fascists. Putin is a fascist, or on his way to being one.

[Judith Kelley:](#) Right, underscoring that it's not a political spectrum?

[Madeleine Albright:](#) It's not a spectrum.

[Judith Kelley:](#) What most concerns you about the rise of fascism today as opposed to in the past?

[Madeleine Albright:](#) Well, I think it's something always to be concerned about. What is troubling now is that the various people tending towards fascism help each other. They are a group that strengthens each other by praise of each other, and by linking themselves. For instance, I found truly strange, Viktor Orbán is somebody that I met in the '80s, when he was everybody's favorite dissident.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) He has now developed a term called "illiberal democracy," which is definitely an oxymoron. But the person he's linked up with is Putin. He has gotten support from Putin. Then Erdoğan, in many ways has gotten also support from the Russians. They live off of each other, and that is what concerns me.

[Judith Kelley:](#) Right.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) The other part that really does concern me is I sometimes talk about the mega trends of this time, and there are positive and negative parts. The first mega trend is obviously globalization. Most of us have benefited from it. But it's downside is that it's faceless, and so people want to know what their identities are, exactly as you were saying.

[Judith Kelley:](#) Right.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) Kind of the identification of an ethnic or tribal group. The downside is that. One thing is being interested in what your identity is, we all want to know that. But

when my identity hates your identity, then it becomes nationalism, and hyper-nationalism is very dangerous.

[Judith Kelley:](#)

Yes, I think it's interesting what you say about Orbán and illiberal democracy, because we've seen sort of, you talk about having worked for the NDI, and we spoke about election monitoring before we just started this podcast. We certainly have seen autocrats undertake their outward signs of democracy with elections and things like that and in many ways run illiberal democracies. The fact that he's sort of able to label it and it's potentially a legitimate way of framing one's rule is curious.

[Madeleine Albright:](#)

It is very curious. I think it's because the term democracy is something that people want to identify with without fully understanding that it takes work on both sides, from the government and the population, in terms of understanding what they're voting for, and working on making sure that the social contract is being carried out.

[Madeleine Albright:](#)

What is so interesting is having read constitutions of authoritarian governments, they somehow all have democracy in it.

[Judith Kelley:](#)

Right.

[Madeleine Albright:](#)

What is another oxymoron term is what the Chinese call themselves, authoritarian capitalism. It's kind of trying to appeal to one group or another.

[Judith Kelley:](#)

Sure, sure.

[Madeleine Albright:](#)

But the other mega trend that has also had an effect on this is technology, and we clearly all are beneficiaries. I always love to talk about the Kenyan woman farmer who no longer has to walk miles to pay her bills, she she can do it on her ...

[Judith Kelley:](#)

On her phone.

[Madeleine Albright:](#)

... on her phone. As a result of that, she can have a life, get an education, start a business, so that's great. But what it has also done as I've said, there are already divisions in society, so technology makes it possible to disaggregate all those voices, and everybody gets their information from their own echo chamber. Then it's very hard to create political parties.

[Judith Kelley:](#)

Right.

[Madeleine Albright:](#)

Those are the things that are going on that make this era more susceptible, I think, to divisions in society. Then what you really need is a leader who understands that there are divisions and can find common answers, instead of one that deliberately divides the people. You find that in all the countries that I mentioned.

[Judith Kelley:](#) You were born in Czechoslovakia and your family escaped the Nazis by fleeing to London, and then after the war, you returned to Czechoslovakia again. But your family then were driven into exile once again, and this time by Stalin and by the communists. Does your experience give you a special insight into fascism?

[Madeleine Albright:](#) Well, I think it does, but mostly it makes me kind of, the reason I wanted to write the book was very personal, trying to figure out how did it happen, what were the conditions that allowed fascism to take place? And in each of those cases, slightly different. But the part that I think it's important to, I think we all have reasons why we get interested in something, but the personal part really did play a role.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) In Czechoslovakia, for instance, what did happen was that the term appeasement is always associated with Munich, and it was that the British and French made an agreement with the Germans and Italians. The United States wasn't at the meeting, but also it kind of thought that well, if we can kind of make a deal, appease Hitler, it will be all right.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) Instead, that kind of lack of understanding about what was going on is what allowed him to march into Prague in March 1939. I think that one of the things that I've been very interested and involved in now is what happens when extremism hits in fragile states, and it's partially because we don't think ahead. Whatever can be done to prevent this kind of way that some, and I have to say evil person divides people even more.

[Judith Kelley:](#) Right.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) Kind of trying to figure out what the symptoms are?

[Judith Kelley:](#) And what the breeding ground are.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) And what the breeding grounds are.

[Judith Kelley:](#) Yeah.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) That's one of the other reasons that I looked at history, and also hope that they're ... I mean, some people think my book is too desperate, in many words, alarming, and it was supposed to be alarming, that's the whole point.

[Judith Kelley:](#) Intentionally provocative.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) Yeah, yeah.

[Judith Kelley:](#) It's a wakeup call.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) Yeah.

[Judith Kelley:](#) Yes. Speaking of wake up calls, your father posited that Americans were so very, very free that maybe they were taking democracy for granted. Do you share that view?

[Madeleine Albright:](#) I do. What has been so interesting, I have to say, I have learned an awful lot on my book tour, because I'm fascinated by the questions that people ask, and I think that there really kind of is a sense of trying to ... People are not, at the moment, they're really want to know what has happened, and don't want to take it for granted.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) I always quote my father in book talks and I say first of all, how grateful he was to come to America, and there's nothing better than to be a professor teaching in a free country. But that he was afraid that Americans were taking democracy for granted.

[Judith Kelley:](#) What kind of questions is it that people have asked particularly on your book tour that have startled you, or sort that you've learned from?

[Madeleine Albright:](#) Well, I think partially, they want to know what to do. What I've done, I say, we all know the see something, say something saying.

[Judith Kelley:](#) Sure.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) I've added to that, do something. I go through my To Do list, which is obviously, first of all, understanding that one has to be careful about a leader who identifies himself with one group, and blames others. Who has no respect for the press, who also has no respect for the judiciary, specifically. Basically, not an understanding of the institutions, so one has to call it out. Then I also say that people need to either run for office, or support those who do. That there needs to be political activity.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) Then on my To Do list, I have two other points. One is that we need to talk to the people we disagree with. I don't like the word tolerance, 'cause that's kind of tolerate, put up with.

[Judith Kelley:](#) Right.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) But respect what they are thinking about, and try to find out why. This morning I was very tempted in the airport. These two women came up to me and one had their picture taken with me, and they had Trump buttons on. I thought, "Okay, we should have a discussion." Then I thought, "It's too early in the morning." But I do think that what we need to do is find out what has motivated the people, and not just kind of put up with them.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) Then the last point, there isn't a book or a speech ever given that doesn't quote Robert Frost. One of the quotes that I like from him is, "The older I get, the younger are my teachers." I think, for instance, what those Parkland kids did

after that horrible shooting, a year ago, of going out and marching and town halls, and a lot of political activity, I'm very interested in how students really are getting more and more active and understand that many of them should have voted the last time.

[Judith Kelley:](#) Right.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) So that, I think people want to know what the To Do list is. The thing though that I say, I don't have some magic answers. I just am stating how these -- this kind of authoritarian, anti-democratic atmosphere develops. And that we all have to push back on it, and push back.

[Judith Kelley:](#) No, certainly, your point about young people needing to vote is so important, especially for our audiences to hear.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) Yeah.

[Judith Kelley:](#) But in a way, in the Brexit vote, it was very clear that it was the young people who stayed home. And it was their future ...

[Madeleine Albright:](#) Yeah, and they also, nobody understood what it was about, the whole thing.

[Judith Kelley:](#) So as we know from Freedom House, we have the global decline in democracy. Do you think that the United States is doing the best it can in democracy promotion? Or is there one particular thing you think that United States could do better?

[Madeleine Albright:](#) No, but first of all, I really do believe in democracy promotion. Interestingly in kind of the modern era, it was something that Ronald Reagan started. He spoke in parliament in England in 1983 and he said democracies were not real good about explaining themselves vis-a-vis communism. He came back to the United States and started The Endowment for Democracy that has four institutes, Democrats and Republicans, business and labor, kind of the warp and woof in terms of working together.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) I think that there has been mostly support for promotion of democracy. Interestingly enough when this first started, and I was the original vice chair, it was very hard to explain to Congress. You know, they said it's interference in domestic affairs, or whatever.

[Judith Kelley:](#) Right.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) Because our political parties don't have institutes attached with them. The ones that are ... I mean, the Germans, for instance, there's chieftains.

[Judith Kelley:](#) Sure.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) They have really had very active and so we began to see what they were doing. For instance, it was just about the time of the end of Franco and Salazar in Spain and Portugal. And what happened was that the German chieftains were in there doing things, and we learned a lot from them. Then kind of it's been up and down in democracy promotion. I think it's very important because you can't impose democracy, that's an oxymoron. What you can do however, is to help people learn the nuts and bolts of democracy, and what is essential.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) I'm very proud I'm now chairman of the board of the National Democratic Institute. We have programs in about 70 countries, and they're a little bit different in every way. But it's working with civil society, thinking about what institutions are needed. By the way, especially sitting in the university, I think students all know that we all, when we were students or are professors, think about what comes first, political or economic development. They clearly go together.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) Because democracy has to deliver, because want to vote and eat. The question is how to create an atmosphere that supports people making choices. One of the things I talk about a lot is democracy is hard, and it takes quite a long time. NDI was very involved in things that were going on or had programs in Egypt during the Arab Spring.

[Judith Kelley:](#) Right.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) I went and I met with a group of Egyptian MPs, members of parliament. I said, "The really essence of democracy is compromise and coalition building." They said, "You mean like you guys?" The bottom line is we are not a great example at this moment. Then the other part, I made up various aspects of is what I was saying before was how social media has played a role in it. Well, social media got people to Tahrir Square in Cairo.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) Then I really say this but elections were held too soon there. The Muslim Brotherhood was organized, and the people on Tahrir Square were not, because they'd gotten their information in their own echo chamber, and they weren't organized. Then I met up this kind of older guy that lives outside of Cairo and needs to go into open his stall in the marketplace.

[Judith Kelley:](#) Right.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) He sees that everything's a mess, and he says, "To hell with this, I want to order." Then all of a sudden you have a military government. So, there has to be a progression of this, and understanding that it's not easy, that it takes time, and those are the kinds of things that I think that one can do and help in the promotion of democracy.

[Judith Kelley:](#) Right. Prior to your visit, we asked some of our social media audiences if they had a couple of minutes in an elevator with you, what would they ask you. I'm going to give you a couple of those questions now.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) Okay.

[Judith Kelley:](#) Lama Hantash, she wondered about something you reportedly said many years ago to Colin Powell, at the time Chairman at the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and there was a disagreement over whether the U.S. should provide humanitarian intervention in Bosnia. You said, "What's the point of having this superb military that you're always talking about if we can't use it?" Lama wonders that if you see the quote as being, and I'm quoting her here, "emblematic of a political culture which recklessly and destructively interferes in foreign politics in Iraq, for example, simply because we can." So how do you respond to that?

[Madeleine Albright:](#) Well, I'm glad to be asked that. Partially, I teach a course actually on the national security toolbox. Force is obviously the toughest one. The bottom line is that I think that there are not a lot of tools in the toolbox, even for the most powerful country in the world. Diplomacy, bilateral and multilateral, the economic tools, aid and trade and then sanctions, and force, intelligence, law enforcement. The question is how do you use them, and in what order?

[Judith Kelley:](#) Right.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) We tried, this was about Bosnia, and what had happened was that I was up in New York at the UN. Candidate Clinton had said he was going to go into Bosnia and do something. Then he got involved with the, is the economy stupid in various parts?' I was out there in various countries would come to me and say, "Why aren't you people doing something? Worse and worse things are happening," in terms of ethnic cleansing, and we actually tried every single tool.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) There were sanctions put on. There was a lot of diplomacy. Ultimately, the question was what could we do to stop killing? I do think there is a time that force is appropriate, if you have tried other tools and especially, with the support if the international community. I think we did the right thing. But Colin Powell, we did have this discussion.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) He left, and then there was another gentleman that joined General Shalikashvili. He believed in using force, we did it with NATO. The ethnic cleansing stopped. Colin Powell writes this book, and all of a sudden, I get a call from a journalist saying, "What do you think about what Colin Powell said about you in his book?" I said, "What did he say?"

[Judith Kelley:](#) What did he say about me?

[Madeleine Albright:](#) He said that he had to explain to ambassador Albright patiently that our soldiers were not toy soldiers, so what do you have to say to that? I called him up and

said ... Oh, he also said that I practically gave him an aneurism with that. I called him and I said, "Colin patiently?" and he said, "Yes, you didn't understand anything." We kid about it an awful lot.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) But I do think there is a time for humanitarian intervention, and you were asking me about how my own life affected this. We now know everything that happened in the Holocaust. I think people at that time said they didn't know, and I'm not going to argue that. We now know everything that happens everywhere. The question is whether the international community does have some responsibility to do humanitarian intervention if you see a leader killing his own people.

[Judith Kelley:](#) The responsibility to protect.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) To protect, yeah.

[Judith Kelley:](#) Another listener, Marta McCabe, asks, "Do you believe that democracies have a life cycle?" In other words, would you say that democracies tend to born glory, to peak and then decline, and reach a low point from which they could either be resurrected again or fall apart? If you think that's true, how would you apply this to the current state of democracy in the U.S.? That's a long question, maybe there's a short version of the answer.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) No, but I do think, I don't know if there's any set cycle, but they clearly are moments where democracy is stronger and democracy is weaker. It's interesting because I've been saying two words that actually could appear contradictory. One is that democracy is fragile, and the other that democracy is resilient. I think both are true, and you don't just kind of have it by virtue of saying I want democracy. It does take work.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) I do think, and it goes back to the democracy has to deliver part. How the system works to have people feel that they're participating in the democracy. I happen to think that what's going on now is the social contract is broken. That people gave up in the 18 century concept, but gave up individual rights, in order to be protected by a government. What's happened is both sides are not fulfilling their responsibilities. I do think there's cycle, I don't know whether its cycles or ups and downs. But it does require work.

[Judith Kelley:](#) With that, thank you very much for joining me today. It's been a pleasure to have you on campus.

[Madeleine Albright:](#) Thank you so much for your questions and your interest, and all the work that you do on this.

[Judith Kelley:](#) Thank you. Madeleine Albright is former U.S. Secretary of State. She's on campus of Duke University to present the David M. Rubenstein Distinguished Lecture. The lecture is presented by the Sanford School of Public Policy and

Dukes program in American Grand Strategy. We'll be back in two weeks with another edition of Policy 360. I'm Judith Kelley.