

Editor's Note: Tom Klingenstein recently sat down with former President Trump at Mar-a-Lago to discuss the unique virtues that make Trump qualified to lead Americans through our cold civil war, the unique threat to the American way of life posed by Kamala Harris and the destructive Left, and much more. A partial transcript of their conversation follows. It has been edited for length and clarity.

Tom Klingenstein: Woke military — what are you going to do?

Donald Trump: Well, the military is not woke. Some of the really foolish leaders on the top are woke, but I took out ISIS, and there was nothing woke about it. I dealt with a general, you could put him and his men in a room and scream woke at them for 10 years, and they'd walk out and they wouldn't be woke.

Klingenstein: But there are a bunch of generals at the top that *are* woke.

Trump: Correct.

Klingenstein: And you'd get rid of them.

Trump: I'd get rid of them so fast, and I know who they are. They're weak, ineffective people, and they are actually woke; I think they actually believe it. I was told in Washington it would take at least four or five years and we probably couldn't do it. I did it in four weeks.

Klingenstein: There are a lot of people out there, Republicans, moderate Democrats, who say, "We're not going to vote for Trump because we don't like him." Now, my response to that is, "Who cares whether you like the guy? This isn't a choice of who you want for dinner. It's not a choice even of who has the best character. What you're being asked to decide is whether you want a man who wants to save and make America great, and a woman who will, whether by accident or not, destroy us. That's it."

Trump: So first of all, she's a disaster. If she becomes president, I think Israel's going to be wiped off the face of the earth very quickly. I think things are going to happen at a level that we've never seen before.

Klingenstein: There are reports that the ABC debate team coordinated with Kamala's team.

Trump: Her friend is the head of the ABC, I think, news division or whatever. Her best friend. His best friend is her husband. They met through these people, and oh, I have absolutely no idea, because those answers — not good memory, but those answers were sort of semi-memorized. In fact, on occasion, she'd get out of kilter and she'd give the wrong answer to the wrong question. That's what we've got.

No, but even worse than that — and that's bad, that's bad — but they would interrupt me every time. And I said, "What's going on here?"

And I had a choice during the debate, I was going to say like ... I was going to hit them hard, but I wanted to be elegant. I wanted to say, "Let's try and forget about it," because I know if I hit them, they'll say, "Oh, he played into their hands." They always like to say that. If I fight for myself, for instance, if they say something negative, and I try and correct them — just quickly, I don't want to waste a lot of time on it, because usually it's nonsense — they say, "Oh, he played right into it." I didn't play into anybody's hands.

Klingenstein: I want a one-word answer.

Trump: Go ahead.

Klingenstein: Are you capable of one word?

Trump: Yes. Well, sometimes you... Am I capable? If it's doable.

Klingenstein: Okay. Kamala says, vote for her, and you're voting for joy. What's the one-word counterpart?

Trump: Competence.

Klingenstein: Competence.

Trump: But real competence. Real, real competence, not just, "He's sort of a competent person." But no, real competence.

Klingenstein: At the Republican convention, the highlight, of course, was your granddaughter.

Trump: Yes.

Klingenstein: And I thought a related highlight was actually your adoring look at your granddaughter, that it's a kind of look that a grandfather has that you can't fake. It's kind of like when your smaller granddaughter got up on your knee. Kids don't do that unless they're comfortable. So I thought that was very sweet, actually. It inspires me to ask, when she said, "He tries to get into my head," how do you do that?

Trump: Well, she's a very competent person and a very smart person. And she's a great athlete, she's a great golfer, she's actually a great golfer, not just like, oh—

Klingenstein: But not quite as good as you are yet.

Trump: I hope not. No, I actually hope so. I want her to be much better than me, if that's doable. The man has an advantage, even though some would like to say, men playing in women's sports. But she's really good and highly competitive. I thought it was very cute when she said that. No, but I'm not—

Klingenstein: But what do you do? Do you know or you're not going to tell me?

Trump: I want to try to beat her, always want to try and beat her, and I think that's the best thing I can do for her, because she's a competitive—

Klingenstein: And also, it's true to your character.

Trump: Yeah. I saw a movie years ago, *Mommy Dearest*. Now, I don't want to be that, you understand that, where the mother was ruthless in the way... Now, I don't know, it was about an actress from Hollywood, you know the whole story, I think. It was sort of a great movie. But it was where the mother was just ruthless in defeating the daughter. She wanted to defeat her, she wanted to bury her, she wanted to just... And no, it's not that. But you want to be competitive and you want to have fun. Now, sometimes somebody can't be competitive.

Klingenstein: It reminds me of one of your virtues. I have written in the past, as you know, about your virtues, not policy, but rather intangible attributes. People say about you, "I love his policies, but I don't like the rest of him." And that's got it backwards, it's the rest of him. Anybody can duplicate your policies, and many people do, but there's no one who can match your character, and one aspect of your character that I think you revealed just there is authenticity. If you get an email from President Trump, you know it's from President Trump, and that no assistant said it, because only President Trump can talk the way you do. Whether you're on the golf course with your granddaughter or with me or with anybody, you're the same. You may not like you, but you know it's you. And authenticity, I think, in politics is very rare.

Trump: Well, I think it is rare, and you have so many phonies, you have so many people, you say, "What are they doing? Why would they be doing that?" And they don't believe what they're doing in the first place. But it's interesting because you mentioned policy. So a lot of people have said, "We love his policy, but we don't like him." I actually think I'm a nice guy, I actually have good relationships with people when they get to know me. But one of the things is that I'm time-constrained. I can't take a lot of time in some of the niceties because I'm trying to do a job, whatever it may be. But there's a certain senator who you wouldn't like because he tends to be — he's a Republican, but he tends to be somewhat liberal, but he's a good man. He is generally right about a lot of things, but he tends to be a little bit on the liberal side for where he is.

He said, "Wait a minute, you don't understand about the policy. Trump policy doesn't work if Trump's not doing it." And he gives the example of, I have a policy, and then I call up the leader of a country, and I force the policy down their throat. Most people can't do that, they can't force policy down — when France put a tax on our country, and they wouldn't, under any circumstance, for Mnuchin, for all of these smart guys you have working for you, they wouldn't do anything about it. I called him and I said, "Oh, you're going to do it, 100%, you're going to do it." 'No, no, I cannot do it.'

To Macron, nice guy. He's a wise guy, and he likes France, but he's a nice guy. I said, "No, no, you're going to do it." 'But it was approved already by our — the equivalent of the legislature, by our parliament, but it was approved already.' I said, "It doesn't matter if it was approved, you're going to do it." I said, "If you don't do it, I'm going to charge you a 100% tariff on every wine and every bottle of champagne that you send into our country." And I don't want to take a lot of time, but he essentially said, "I would be really very much inclined." I said, "Don't be inclined, are you going to take the tax off or not?" He said, "I will take the tax off immediately." So they all had my policy, nobody was able to get it done, but I got it done. So it's not just policy.

Klingenstein: I think we're in a war, and at a philosophical level, what makes it a war is that the two sides have different understandings of justice. One side, our side, believes in individual merit; their side believes in group quotas. Those don't mix. You can't admit people to school based on merit *and* quotas. Philosophically, theoretically, that's what makes it a war. And then, there's all kinds of evidence that the other side is trying to destroy America: open borders, foreign energy dependence, educating Chinese nationals who'll go back to China, quotas everywhere, teaching about 'America is racist.' But that's the number one thing. So the first point is, we're in a war, we need a warrior. You are a wartime president. You may not be some other type of president, but you are a wartime president.

And I think one of the things that we have to recognize is that the key weapon they have is very simple: they say we're racist, they say we're evil, and that provides them the justification for overturning America. And as I said to you earlier, one of your great virtues, part of the rest of you that people don't attend enough to, is that you don't have white guilt. And when people say America is racist, you can say "horse manure." And that's what we have to do. There are no politicians other than you, that I'm aware of, who are willing to simply assertively dismiss. There's another thing, by the way, that you're good at, a virtue: asserting. Not explaining, you're not a great explainer, you're an asserter, and in war, asserting is more important than explaining. So I think the point I wanted to make, and the point to the audience is that the absence of white guilt and your ability, therefore, to rebut the charge that we're racist, is absolutely essential.

Trump: Well, that's very differently explained than anybody I've heard, and it's very true. And what you are saying is — and I watched some of these very weak-kneed people just cower at the thought of being called a racist. They call everybody a racist. You always know that's their final, when you're winning, that means they start calling you racist.

Klingenstein: I think it would be helpful for you to actually more often make the claim, we're not racist. You make the claim that the media is fake. You gave us a word. You didn't have to explain it-

Trump: Great word.

Klingenstein: ...everybody knew the media is fake.

Trump: Great word, you have to say.

Klingenstein: It is a good word, but what if-

Trump: It's not strong enough, though.

Klingenstein: It's good.

Trump: It was a great word. No, it was a great word. It's not strong enough.

Klingenstein: Well, do you want to amend it?

Trump: They're corrupt.

Klingenstein: My point is, you gave permission for other people to say it.

Trump: Correct.

Klingenstein: It's not just you saying it now. A lot of people say it. And it's the same thing with, "We're not racist." The average person doesn't think they're racist, they don't think they have white privilege. The elite may think that, but not the average person where I live in Maine. But they need their leaders to confirm it.

Trump: But I've seen people, when they're called racist, strong politicians, strong men, generally, they cower. They are so afraid of being called racist that they'll do anything for the other side. And I think that's a little bit what you're saying.

Klingenstein: That's the problem.

Trump: But what I say is a little bit different, and maybe a little bit earlier in the process. We have enemies outside, but we also have the enemy from within. And I say, and I've said it for a long time, and I took hundreds of billions out of China and we got along, we got along fine, other than COVID, where that was a bridge too far, as far as I was concerned. But I took hundreds of billions of dollars from China, we got along great. I made a trade deal with China, I don't even talk about it, it was one of the greatest deals ever made economically, \$50 billion a year in purchasing of our product. Nobody talks about it, and that's okay, because once COVID came, I don't talk about anything having to do with it, it was really a bridge too far. But we have the outside enemy, and we have the enemy from within. And I say that the enemy from within is far more dangerous than the outside enemy, because if you have a capable president, I'll always be able to get along with Russia, China, with Kim Jong Un.

Klingenstein: See, that's when I think you even ought to say more than you do. So let me ask this question.

Trump: Go ahead.

Klingenstein: I'm very interruptious.

Trump: No, you are, and I love that, because a lot of people aren't, and you go off in — you don't let anybody go off on a tangent, and I will not let you go off on a tangent, but you go ahead.

Klingenstein: You're tough.

Trump: You go ahead.

Klingenstein: Now you've distracted me. What was I talking about?

Trump: The enemy from within.

Klingenstein: We need a name for the enemy. Now, I've taken to calling it Kamalism. We don't even have a name for our enemy regime. We know who China is. Can you imagine fighting a war if you can't name the enemy? And you are the one, you are our namer in chief. You are the great namer.

Trump: I've given a lot of great names, I think so.

Klingenstein: Okay, but now you need one.

Trump: Right, I'm not totally satisfied with Comrade, because a lot of people don't quite understand what it means. She is a Marxist, she's a communist, she's a fascist, and she's not very smart. And these are bad things. And by the way, if she ever won, my life won't be so great in this country, but I don't care, I don't care. We have to explain who this woman—

Klingenstein: But now, there are two things.

Trump: ...we have to explain who this woman is.

Klingenstein: Absolutely.

Trump: This woman is a disaster.

Klingenstein: But you got to explain that this woman is part of a movement.

Trump: It's true.

Klingenstein: It's not Nazism—

Trump: Bad movement.

Klingenstein: ...it's not communism exactly.

Trump: No.

Klingenstein: But you have to name—

Trump: It's actually Stupidism, because when you think about it—

Klingenstein: Well, maybe that's the name.

Trump: ...what they're doing is so stupid. The open border, who wants an open border where tens of millions of people have come in here from other countries' jails?

Klingenstein: How about commu—

Trump: I've usually put some moniker on opponents if I can, like Pocahontas was a good name because she said she was an Indian and she wasn't. So I apologize to the real Pocahontas. They demanded I apologize to Pocahontas, so I did to the real Pocahontas. But there are great names, and a lot of them, I can't mention because they're Republicans who I did during my little trials and tribulations in the primaries.

Klingenstein: Well, my only advice is, get with a name for the purpose—

Trump: Well, do you like Comrade?

Klingenstein: Yeah.

Trump: It's not bad.

Klingenstein: And it's accurate.

Trump: Yeah, it's pretty accurate. I think it's pretty accurate.

Klingenstein: And so, if she's Comrade, then the movement of which she is nominally the head of is Kamalism or Communism.

Trump: Well, Comrade, it means she's into that whole sect.

Klingenstein: Right, but Comrade just refers to her.

Trump: That's right.

Klingenstein: And I think it's important to point out that she's the head, at least nominally, the head of a movement.

Trump: Yeah, but I don't think she is the head. That's the interesting thing.

Klingenstein: Well, I don't either.

Trump: I don't think she is the head, there are other people behind her that are telling her what to do.

Klingenstein: I agree. Now, because I don't—

Trump: And by the way, she shouldn't be allowed to run. She got no votes, this was a coup, this was just like a nice, hard South American coup, but there was no blood.

Klingenstein: See, here's the real coup that nobody talks about. Your administration was overthrown. Nothing to do with vote fraud, leave that aside. All the character assassinations, the bogus investigations, lies, frauds, impeachment — that constitutes a coup right in front of our face, and I think you and Republicans ought to say that. And when they say to you, "Gee, we worry about Trump, because he's going to effect a coup." The response is, "Yeah, but you guys already effected a coup." It was a coup.

Trump: You know it better than anybody, and it's very interesting because your writings, and I read your things, and I don't know that much about you, [but] as soon as I read your first statement about me, I said, "This guy's got it figured." So many people don't understand what they did, and the problem we have, we have a lot of weak people in the Republican Party. They're not willing to play the game with the same level of ferocity that the Democrats play the game. Adam Shifty-Schiff is a truly bad guy, he's a crooked guy. The Russia—

Klingenstein: See, that's how we have to understand, we're in a war.

Trump: We're in a war.

Klingenstein: And in a war, you play by different rules. And you don't compromise, because there's no basis for compromise. Let me get back to the debate, Republicans criticized you, some of them.

Trump: Some. And some love me, and they still do.

Klingenstein: Republicans shouldn't be criticizing... You're our man.

Trump: Well, we can't help it. Mitt Romney is Mitt Romney. He's a bad guy. They're weak.

Klingenstein: But all I'm saying is, when you're in a war, you defend your commander in chief.

Trump: Well, I'm always saying that the Republicans don't stick together like they — now, I tell you what, on impeachment hoaxes, they stuck together, they were great to me. I actually had a unanimous [vote] in the House, which is unheard of, and outside of Romney, who actually only voted half, half a vote, if you can believe it, but I had unanimous in the Senate. They stuck together for that, that was a very important thing because it was a hoax. They're all hoaxes. Everything's a hoax. *Russia, Russia, Russia* was a hoax. They do that, and what they do is, they distract you from doing things to our country that are great, as I say, make America great again, because you're fighting...

But the Republicans — and I'm not talking about for me, just if you look over the last 50 years — the Republicans don't stick [together] the way the Democrats do. The Democrats are willing to go for really horrible policy. I think generally speaking, their policy is horrible. Nancy Pelosi is a horrible human being. I know her very well, she's a sick, horrible person, but she gets people to stick together, she gets them to stick together for bad things. These are bad people, what they do to our country, these are very bad people, and I can name a lot of them on the other side. The Republicans have to get tougher. For instance, they cheat like hell on elections. We have a thing called the SAVE Act, it's not the end-all, but it makes it a little bit tougher.

They just approved something where the SAVE Act comes up after the election. I said, "Wait a minute, you just read about it yesterday." They approved and they extended it. They did a continuing resolution, of course, because they always do, they just go on and on. And we have a thing attached to the continuing resolution called the SAVE Act. It has to do with elections which are taking place right now. They approve and do the continuing resolution where the SAVE Act is going to be approved probably, but sometime after the election. What the hell good does that do us? So it's so disappointing, they don't fight like they should fight. Their policies — actually, the Republican policies are good. You're a very smart man, I know for a fact that you're a very rich man, why the hell do you do this?

Klingenstein: Probably for the same reason-

Trump: Same reason I do it.

Klingenstein: I think this is very important. I think I have something to offer, like you. I don't have quite what you have to offer, but I have a particular constellation of skills, and I have resources, and I have something of a platform, so I can contribute, and this is my opportunity.

Trump: Are you a golfer?

Klingenstein: I am.

Trump: Do you play well?

Klingenstein: Not as well as you do.

Trump: Well, will you play golf with me at the appropriate time?

Klingenstein: Well, that's very nice of you, but I think I'll pass.

Trump: Because you don't want to be shot at. I think I'll lose a lot of golf games. To be honest with you, I'm noticing people, well, people that love playing golf with me, they're saying, "Gee, I'd love to, but I'm not feeling so well today." Now, I always say, golf is a very dangerous game, and I've proven that, right?

Klingenstein: Yes, you have. Well, I hope your security is top-notch.

Trump: I think it is. And I tell you, I think they did a great job on the second situation, I really do, to have somebody pick up the barrel of a gun was pretty good. Somebody else is walking down the fairway looking at the weather, "Okay, isn't it a beautiful day?" And this guy took out his gun and he started shooting, and that guy ran, and then he was caught. But it's very heavy. Well, you're going to see that today because you're coming with me to North Carolina.

Klingenstein: Okay, I'm really looking forward to it.

Trump: You're going to see more machine guns on the tops of buildings than you've ever seen before. Yeah, I'm very happy with it, I'm very happy with it.

Klingenstein: Good. Thank you very much.

Trump: Thank you very much.

Klingenstein: I appreciate it.

Trump: That's a different kind of an interview, but this guy... I'm not going to argue with this guy because he's one smart cookie.

Klingenstein: Thank you.

Donald Trump: Good. Let's go have some fun, okay?

Tom Klingenstein: Okay.