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Brookings Cafeteria Podcast:
Minority voting in the 2016 election

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DEWS: Welcome to the Brookings Cafeteria, a podcast about ideas and the experts who have them. I'm Fred Dews. We're getting down to the wire in the U.S. election season. In recent episodes, I spoke with scholars about the economic and foreign policy issues that're driving the conversation and that the next president will have to tackle. In today's episode, a fascinating discussion about race and politics, the history of African American participation in politics, and how minority turnout could affect the results this year. Also, a view on what happened in the VP debate.

Then, why are swing states important? And finally, it's not all about the election; you'll hear our new metro lens segment with a focus on factory China in China's big cities. My colleague Adrianna Pita, host of the intersections podcast, sat down with non-resident senior fellow Fredrick Harris to get his insight on race and politics.

PITA: Welcome, my name is Adriana Pita and I'm guest hosting a segment on the Brookings Cafeteria today. With me is Fredrick Harris; he's a professor of political science and director of the center on African American politics and society at Columbia University and he's also a non-resident senior fellow here at Brookings with our Government Studies Program. Thank You Fred for being with us today.

HARRIS: well thanks for inviting me.

PITA: So we're in the back stretch of a presidential election year, which means that all the prognosticators are very hard at work trying to figure out how everyone is going to vote. Minority voters have been playing an increasingly important role in the last two presidential elections both through just a raw increase in population but also through increases in turn out; Asian voters particularly had a massive increase in turnout in 2008 and 2012 so a lot of that was of course in response to historical

significance of our first black president but now that he's not on the ballot anymore, the big question is what can we expect from minority voters and turnout really is apparently the key there. So what are your thoughts about what we can expect?

HARRIS: Yeah turnout is really key. This is going to be really a test election because, as you said, President Barack Obama will not be on the ballot. In 2008 for instance, African Americans' turnout was slightly, only slightly less than for white Americans. In 2012 actually, it exceeded white turnout and surprisingly black women had the highest level of turnout than any racial and gender group and so 2016 will be really interesting. What we have is basically, I think, two candidates who have strong different positions, Hillary Clinton for the Democrats, Donald Trump for the Republicans and in many ways I think people will be voting from a position of fear; in 2008 and in 2012 people were voting from a sense of empowerment and the question is will fear be more of a stimulant or less of a stimulant in voter turnout for minorities than a sense of empowerment.

PITA: Some of our colleagues have also talked about – Michael Fontray was just on a panel with you talking about that the context of this election is racial backlash so it's both racial fears from white Americans but also economic fears as well. Let's talk about some of these fears that are driving African American voters, Latino voters, and then also driving the white voters that's – what are the competing fears that are going on here?

HARRIS: Yeah, I really do think 2016 will be a fear election and I think it will be a historical marker. I'm a political scientist but I think in many ways from a historical perspective so just going back to the 19th century for instance; during this period of

great progress where you have African Americans who are emancipated to become citizens a part of what's viewed at least at that time as a multiracial democracy and then basically around 1877 until the turn of the 20th century, gradually African Americans' rights are being eroded. They're part of the party of Lincoln, they elect African Americans to Congress, to local levels, there were two black US senators, one governor from Louisiana, by the turn of the 20th century there were none, no black elected officials and in fact, racism, white supremacist ideology, the exclusion of African Americans legally and extra-legally from the polity, from the political system, was pretty much accomplished; it was called white redemption and it was a response of white anxieties, white concerns about black progress that sort of drove this redemption and so we see these cycles of histories in many ways repeating itself, you know, the nineteen sixties and seventies were great moments of black progress.

In many ways, you know, with the voting rights act in 1965, we just recently celebrated a half-century of the Voting Rights Act, was probably one of the most successful pieces of legislation that came out of the civil rights movement and it's the reason why we saw black and white voters being at an equal mark and also very instrumental in bringing Asian-American voters and Latino voters and securing their voting rights and expanding their opportunities within the political system. and so now we have this sort of, in this moment when the nation's first president of African descent is leaving, there seems to be this this anxiety over economic issues, over sort of progress for some groups like working-class whites, you know, there are various constituencies who have people speaking on their behalf during the Obama era where there's LGBTQ communities who've been largely successful in pushing their agenda.

Latinos, around issues of immigration and other communities of color who have immigrated here, have not been as successful but issues of immigration have been on the table and I suspect a lot of those people who are filling those anxieties, those white working-class people are wondering who's speaking on my behalf and in many ways they probably see Donald Trump as a person who talked to talk and walked the walk on and perhaps been disappointed both at the Democratic and the Republican Party and that Trump, they see, as this, as they perceive as a successful businessman, will be a person who would champion their issues so you have this sort of increase of, as we talked about during the panel, of xenophobia of this sort of more explicit expressions of racism coming at a time where minority groups, African American specifically as it relates to you know their political successes around the election of Barack Obama, facing in the Obama era this step of one step forward but towards the end two steps back as we saw during Reconstruction and other parts of American history and so this is where we are and I think a lot of that fear is about the browning of America, the emergence of a new America as Bill Frey demonstrated both in his book and in the presentation on the panel.

By 2050, this will be a majority-minority, sounds like an oxymoron, nation and I think there are deep anxieties about that and what positions will, sort of, particularly white working-class voters in many ways because of, sort of, the good old days or, you know, when America was quote ’great’, many really had discriminatory protectionist policies but discriminatory against minorities African Americans who sort of had to prop up, you know, white working-class America because it lessened competition for jobs, for resources, for housing, and that sort of thing and so there's this long stretch of history

where we see this enormous demographic, social political change that people feel deep anxieties about.

PITA: One of those changes has also been in the last 25 years; the geographic spread of some minority populations. so one of the other things that was in Barack Obama's favor in the last two elections was that the black vote and Hispanic vote was now no longer confined to the traditionally democratic states.

The last 25 years saw a lot of African Americans returning to the south; it saw Hispanics and Asians moving in from the traditional immigrant areas along the coast and spreading into states that were red strongholds now making them more purple and in some cases turning them blue. can you talk a little about some of the trends that led to those demographic shifts? is it - what are, sort of, the economic reasons for the African Americans returning to the South, that kind of thing.

HARRIS: Yeah, that's a very interesting question. I think around immigration, particularly among Mexican-Americans and Central Americans, it's just not as concentrated as immigration patterns have been in the past and even in the recent past where, you know, it's sort of Asian-American concentration in California, you know, the bay area, in LA, and, you know, or in parts of New York and sort of just spreading to the suburbs of mobility and New Jersey.

Increasingly it's been dispersed where job opportunities were so this sort of push-and-pull effect sort of being pushed out of sort of lessening economic opportunities in Central America and Mexico and being pulled because of, you know, low labor costs in places in the Great Plains right? you know, throughout, you know, places like, you know, Nevada or even in tiny places like Iowa even though they're not competitive yet.

just getting a sense that the old patterns of immigration settling are not the same as they used to be. For African Americans it’s very curious and I think what you see in places like Illinois, in places like New York City, the Northeast, Midwestern cities like, you know, Cleveland and Detroit sort of return home and it's not really oftentimes to return the people who actually grew up in South, they may have roots there, but and it's really their parents or their grandparents and part of this has to do with better economic opportunities, the lower cost of living but also the sense that it's not the Jim Crow south that their parents and grandparents lived in and so what we see, so from Bill’s presentation, like you know one of the things that may be changing my home state of Georgia, I grew up in Atlanta, and you know it’s the cradle of the civil rights movement because Dr. King was born there, you know he campaigned throughout the South as a civil rights leader but there's this great pride and although it's dominated by the republican party in the state legislature and has a republican governor, there's still a sense, socially, that Georgia and the Atlanta area particularly, is a great place to live.

Now what that has created or is creating because you also have these Latino population settling there and increasingly an Asian population and so with this combination of black migration, slight increases in Asian immigration, and Central American and Mexican immigration when this whole immigration issue gets settled, is that places like Georgia and the South are gonna be turning purple or perhaps even light blue and so you have, you know, a new, you know, we always talk about the new south and Henry Grady, you know, in the late 19th century trying to get industry from the north to come south talked about, you know, George or Atlanta or the region as the new south and we heard this you know during the civil rights movement, particularly

again in my home state of Georgia, it was known as - or the city of Atlanta was known as the city too busy to hate and so there's always this new invention but I think this is going to create something new, much more of a multiracial, multicultural minority that has the potential of transforming the South.

We also see this possibly in North Carolina and even South Carolina is tipping toward a light red too, you know, it's getting increasingly quite interesting. I think the Republican Party is going to figure out how to – if they want to survive as a party – we'll see, you know, because, you know, this may be the last stand of sort of the old racial order of the black-white and binary and, you know, the residual legacies of Jim Crow and uses racist language and racist appeal or it could be a battle that's going to go on into 2050 when you have this tipping point that's going to occur or it can be a rebirth or birth of something new right? And so again, I think this is going to be a critical election; 2016 is going to be critical for a variety of reasons but one of the reasons is to see the battle between the new multiracial order or the old racist order that seems to be in the midst of this 2016 campaign.

PITA: speaking of that something new and where the new multiracial future is going, so pollsters as they try to figure out trends and diagnose, translate, tend to break people down into the black vote, and the Latino vote, and the woman vote and of course it's much more complicated than that so if this wasn't an election of fear this year, what are some of the other issues that are really driving some of these different groups? where are some of the nuance amongst those blocks that we usually break people into?

HARRIS: I think always an issue in American elections, even though they don't

get talked about much particularly in this election, are economic issues, the bread-and-butter issues, you know, even though there's been success in the Affordable Health Care, there are still in some states where people don't have access to cost effective healthcare and so I think jobs, economic development, are issues, and trade is another issue where in some ways you may have even consensus between – among both parties but among those constituencies, there may be more in common than people think they have and this particularly comes between - it's always been baffling to me - among white working-class voters who I argue often times vote more on cultural issues than economic issues right? And so, you know, I've been around voting since the Reagan-era so, you know, I remember things like, you know, prayer in schools, you know, abortion oftentimes has been a hot button issue and that's been an issue that's sort of driven sort of white working-class, particularly those who lean Republican and not enough focus on those economic issues or maybe they think those economic issues are connected to those cultural issues and so there are opportunities it seems to me for cross-racial coalition-building. Not just sort of multiracial coalition building that we often hear, you know, African Americans, Latinos Americans, Asian Americans, the new – the emerging new majority by 2015 but also among white working-class voters.

I think it's something that W.E.B. Du Bois talked about when he tried to figure out why is it during this period of Reconstruction where you had these ex-slaves and you had these working-class white people who didn't own land, why is it that they didn't join in a coalition against their economic interest, the landowners. Du Bois talked about the psychological wages of whiteness, right? So not what they get materially from being workers, but, you know, even though they may not be doing as well as these blacks or

former slaves or a little better, at least they were not black, that they got some sort of psychological privilege based on their white skin. I think that's been part of the problem. I think that political leaders have exploited that difference. It was the Democrats during the period of reconstruction from most of the 20th century, they were the party of white supremacy.

Things changed by the nineteen sixties and then the Republican Party would use sort of, I would argue, racial divisions in order to solidify its support but in doing that there has been less attention to looking at the cross economic concerns of Americans, particularly who are on the margins, economic margins and so the question becomes as we become more diverse, are we going to pay less attention to sort of checking off sort of this the diversity successes of one, you know, political party, you know, the country's first black president, the first - country's first woman president, when are going to have our first, you know, openly gay Supreme Court appointment? When are going to have our, you know, it's the first whatever.. right?

And which I guess is good for solidarity; it's very important for political recognition because marginal groups, you know, who have been excluded because the demographics are changing, we're going towards 2050 and so the country should reflect that diversity but in reflecting that diversity, I wonder, or emphasizing it so strongly, do we sort of bypass or not emphasize enough the common economic concerns of people in this country who are struggling.

DEWS: I'll take you back to the interview with Fred Harris in a minute but first here is senior fellow Elaine Kamarck on the Vice Presidential debate.

KAMARCK: Hi, my name is Elaine Kamark; I'm a senior fellow here at Brookings.

I'm author of *Why President's Fail and How They Can Succeed Again*, and also of a new paper called “The Relationship that Rules the World: Modern Presidents and Their Vice Presidents. In the wake of last night's vice presidential debate, I think we saw a lot of attention paid to why the Vice President is so important in this day and age. We look at the vice-president differently than we used to. The vice president has become in modern America a lot more than an understudy to the job; the vice president has become a real partner in the job and that's why we are paying a lot of attention to the vice presidential candidates, but more of that in a minute.

What has been the reason for this change? Well, the change has come about because in the old days when we nominated presidents in conventions filled with party leaders, the vice presidency was usually the primary bargaining chip used by the presidential candidate to lock up the nomination. That was the biggest thing you had to give away and so frequently you would have a northern candidate like John Kennedy from Massachusetts pick a southern Democrat like Lyndon Johnson from Texas the famous Boston-Austin access and that was to balance the ticket and also to give Kennedy the number of Delegates he needed to secure the nomination. That took place for most of our president elections and nominations until nineteen ninety-two when Bill Clinton broke the mold rather than picking Mario Cuomo who was from a different region, he was from the north not the south, and from a different wing of the party, he was from the traditional liberal wing not the new democrat wing that Bill Clinton represented, Bill Clinton chose a vice-presidential candidate, Al Gore, who not only didn't balance him but mirrored him. In other words, Al Gore was just like Bill Clinton; same age, same region of the country, same part of the Democratic Party. Clinton

picked Gore for reinforcing his message not balancing his ticket and that method has become, in fact, the norm as opposed to the other method of ticket balancing.

The result of that is that vice presidents have become very important in the White House because think about it this way, when you're in an arranged marriage when the choice of your vice president is for political convenience, odds are that the two of you may not have very much in common and throughout history we've had presidents and vice-presidents who didn't like each other one bit. When you choose somebody who is like you and to help you, then that person can be a partner in your presidency because you can trust that partner to carry out tasks for you and so in the most recent president vice-president pairs, we've seen that at work. Al Gore had many areas of policy that were his own that Clinton delegated to him; Dick Cheney was probably the most powerful vice president we've ever had who so powerful and into so many things that a lot of people thought he was the president; Joe Biden has done very similar job with Barack Obama taking on some big important issues and being the first among many in the White House so that brings us to this race.

Either of these men who we saw debate, if they're going to be elected, either one of them is going to be a very important player in the White House. Pence of course, Governor Mike Pence, will be a lot more important even than Senator Kaine and of course the reason is that we have a sort of unusual situation in that Donald Trump has no experience in government at all. So, I think people looked very closely at these two candidates. In the case of Kaine, they want to know, ok, how will he balance Hillary out in terms of temperament, and what kinds of chores might she give to him.

In the case of Pence, I think people were looking to see some stability and some

knowledge of the government because in point of fact, if Donald Trump got elected, Pence could turn out to be the most powerful vice-president in our history. Regardless, the model itself has changed and the office of the vice president is simply different today than it has been for most of American history. Thank you very much; Elaine Kamark here from Brookings.

DEWS: Thanks Elaine. You can find her new paper on the vice-presidency, “The Relationship that Rules the World,” on our website.

PITA: One of the other questions that is going to be a big player in this election is what effect the repeal of article 5 of the Voting Rights Act will have.

HARRIS: Yeah, this is gonna be a test selection because after the success in 2012 of – for the first time in recorded history African Americans voted at a higher – turnout at a higher level than white Americans in recorded history. Black women, as I mentioned, voted more than any other constituency, you know, that happened that November. By the spring term of the Supreme Court the following year, pretty much the Supreme Court gutted the Voting Rights Act; section 5 was in many ways an enforcement mechanism that sort of kept southern jurisdictions and, you know, those that - states that were covered by the Voting Rights Act were mostly southern states, some cities around the country that had a legacy of racial discrimination.

It is true, as the supreme court said, that the geographic locations had not changed and that could be evidence, as there is, of discrimination of minority voters in other states that were not covered by section 5 but they sort of stripped in sort of, you know, punted it to Congress to fix, which is a congress headed by political party that's not interested, obviously, in fixing it and so in many ways you have this sort of, as I

mentioned before, you know, one step forward, two steps back and so you have the success of greater inclusion, right? You have two, sort of, US Senate - black US senators. Maybe there's going to be a third in California, who knows.

So you see sort of gradual, you know, the steady march, as two political scientists titled their book when they looked at this black progress from a historical perspective. You see the Supreme Court sort of gutting one of the most successful pieces of legislation in the civil rights era. I mean this is hugely successful mostly because there was a strong enforcement mechanism. If there are any changes in in voting rules or moving of a poll, it had to be cleared by the Justice Department or federal courts. Now that's been taken away and so there's been some legal challenges; it puts the greater burden on people who are making or groups that are making claims of voting rights violations and so, you know, it's a legal challenge, very expensive, but you know we have voter ID laws that are cropping up in the same states that were covered by section 5 that would have been pretty much checked by the Justice Department and so what's going to be crucial in this election is that if we see some fall off, slight fall off, major fall of on black voter participation, is it going to be because of lack of enthusiasm in elections or is it because there are barriers or impediments to voter participation that would not have been there had section 5 remained intact

PITA: One of the other big voting blocs is going to be of course the Millennial groups and as, for example, among Latinos there are four million more Latinos who turned 18 since the twenty twelve election. That turnout question is the big question among Millennials. Do we have any notion yet either through polling or maybe through

the half-term election in 2014 about what millennial turnout is looking like or what can we expect this year?

HARRIS: I think this generation of young people is is a little bit more political, sophisticated than previous generations and those in the in the late sixties, early seventies around the Vietnam war but there's a connection. I think there's a much more of a propensity to look at different types of engagement, not just electoral politics but also protest politics. I think one of the most remarkable things is that look at the issue of criminal justice reform, for instance, through black lives matter. Look at the articulation or the lack of articulation is that is a policy issue in 2008 and even in 2012. Black lives matter, other social movements like activism around immigration reform, for instance; those things have done more to put those issues on the political agenda than a two-term black Democrat, a Hispanic caucus or a congressional black caucus or all of the delegates at the National Convention for the Democrats.

They did that, you know, in a span of a few years and so they are engaging in way that's not necessarily linked to electoral politics that's moving the agenda whereas the people working very hard in these sort of interest groups and organizations, you know, middle-aged people like me, policy wonks like people here at Brookings and other places, but it's the action in the street that's pushing the agenda even in the context of a republican-dominated Congress. They may not be acting on it but they're thinking about it and so are the presidential candidates and so I don't know how much they're gonna turn out; I don't know if it's a sense of disappointment with, I mean, some young black voters that this Democratic president didn't do as much as they thought that was going to accomplish. I think many of them recognize the stumbling blocks of the

Republican Party but many of them also recognize that the President himself for most of this term was reluctant to talk explicitly about race and racism, right? That space didn't open up for him until after the emergence of black lives matter, which is again the importance of placing pressure on public officials, whether they're democrats or republicans, to get your issue on the political agenda.

I think one possibility is that they're going to be motivated again by this idea of fear, right? Maybe people – this younger generation which tend to lean liberal will say, you know, we have to stop Trump, right? Some may be turned off with the Democratic alternative with Hillary Clinton around issues of trust. But also, what people should be paying attention to that may be under the radar is that we also have two other presidential candidates and parties and it will be see if, sort of, millenniums will be disproportionately, if they vote and come out in large numbers or even in moderate numbers, will some of them peel off and vote for those alternatives?

PITA: And do you think that will be because of the distrust of the current system, that they just see gridlock, they see no progress so let's go third-party and try and break up-

HARRIS: Yeah, perhaps so. I mean, I think people are tired of business as usual and it has to be something new; people see the political system as corrupt. There's too much money in the political System, whether it's sort of on the Republican side or the Democratic side, that's why you had a lot of enthusiasm among Millennials for Bernie Sanders, right? Where are those voters gonna come? And they were - that's - you know - I always tell people - you know, again, I think like a historian. Bernie Sanders supporters this year reminded me of Jesse Jackson supporters in eighty-eight, right?

this partly, sort of social movement, partly electoral campaign, sort of, people deeply committed, deeply disappointed, also, with the outcome in that their candidate didn't make it through. Jesse came in second place in 1988; people forget that.

PITA: Wow. Yeah, I didn't realize.

HARRIS: Yeah and so - and there are people at the convention who were outright - his delegates were just mad, upset about what had occurred in that, you know, they think that the campaign was stolen from them, you know, Dukakis, governor Dukakis of Massachusetts got the nomination, he's defeated by Ronald Reagan, at least personally from my perspective. I hope it's not a repeat of 88, at least, in a general, from my perspective. So it will be interesting to see. I'm excited about this new generation of voters and activists even if they don't come out in stronger numbers as they did in 2008 because in my view in moving these issues forward like immigration and and particularly criminal justice reform, they've already won.

PITA: Alright, well thank you very much to Fredrick Harris and we'll see what happens in November.

HARRIS: Thanks for having me.

PITA: Thank you.

DEWS: You can find more election analysis and commentary on our website at Brookings.edu/election2016. Why are swing states so important? That's one of the questions senior fellow John Hudak takes on in our elections 101 video series where Brookings political experts answer common questions about the election process.

HUDAK: Swing states are the handful of states in any presidential election that is

competitive.They’re competitive for a variety of reasons; it can be historical reasons, it can be the certain demographics that make up a state, but ultimately these are the states where presidential elections are decided. It’s where 75 percent or more of a candidate's money is spent on TV advertising and ground games and on election day, whoever wins the most swing states ends up becoming president. Swing states matter because the U.S. presidential election does not happen by a national vote or a national referendum; the presidential election is 50 individual state races and a race in the District of Columbia as a candidate seeks to cross that 270 electoral vote threshold to become president.

There are a lot of states that Republicans know they're going to win and a lot of states that Democrats know they're going to win but there's a small group of states that are up for grabs; that are swing states, that are the states where competitive dynamics come together to determine, ultimately, who the president is going to be and it’s in these states that money is spent, time is spent, and the candidates appear most often, and, ultimately, the winner of those states are- is the individual who crosses that 270 vote threshold. An example of a key swing state right now in 2016 is North Carolina.

In the 2008 Election, North Carolina was one of the closest races in the country. Then senator Obama barely eked out a win for the electoral votes in that state, beating John McCain. In 2012, however, Obama's fortune changed and Mitt Romney was able to win North Carolina. What that tells candidates moving forward is that this is a state that swings back fourth and if a candidate wants to win those electoral votes, they're going to have to put in the time, the money, the energy, and most importantly the

strategy to try to get, for a Democrat, North Carolina to flip back or for a Republican, to keep that state red.

DEWS: Visit our website to watch all of our election 101 video Series, which include topics like polls, the ground game, and congressional races. Finally today, it's not all about the Election. Did you know that China has 14 cities and over 5 million people whereas the US has eight? Here's metropolitan policy program fellow Joseph Parilla with an important take on globalization and urbanization, particularly in China.

PARILLA: Hello, this is Joseph Parilla, a fellow here at the Brookings metropolitan policy program. Globalization and urbanization, two big trends with significant consequences for the world's cities and the half of humanity that call them home. Perhaps no nation has been transformed by these forces more than China where the country's decades-long emergence has coincided with a massive rural to urban migration. In 1950, only about 13% of China's population lived in cities. By 2010, that share reached 45% and it's on its way to seventy percent; fully a billion urban residents by 2030. While millions of these migrants end up in Beijing, Shanghai, and China's other largest global cities, the majority have gone to places that may sound less familiar to you. Chengdu, Nantong, Zibo, these are China's lesser-known cities but critical players in China's past success and perhaps the key to its future.

To understand why, we need to first understand how these cities have plugged into the global economy. In a recent report, Jesus Leal Trujillo and I examine the economic functions of a hundred and twenty-three of the world's largest global cities. That analysis revealed seven different types of global cities; each type engaging in the international marketplace based on their unique industry advantages and competitive

assets. One of these seven groups consist entirely of 22 Chinese cities that we have called factory china as these metros constitute the heart of China's industrial base. With only twenty-five percent of the country's population, factory China metros generate one-third of china's total manufacturing output. This global niche has allowed factory China metros to be engines for economic mobility.

As rural residents have moved to cities to take higher-paying factory jobs, incomes have soared. Real incomes in factory China metro areas have increased fivefold since 2000, placing many of their residents firmly in the global middle class. No metro area grew faster in that time period then Hefei, a city of around 7 million people located two and a half hours west of Shanghai. With good connectivity to China's large coastal ports, Hefei has been well positioned to benefit as industry has moved inland in search of land and labor. Today the region's factories turn out everything from cars to appliances to processed foods. Like Trenton before it, what Hefei makes, the world takes and as a result, the average income of a Hefei resident increased from about 18 hundred dollars per year in 2002 to over ten thousand dollars per year in 2015. A six hundred percent increase. That increase in income is simply astounding, but if the rate at which it occurred sounds unsustainable to you, it's probably because it is. Unsustainable environmentally, heavy industry has helped raise incomes but it has also contributed to pollutant levels that are 40 times above what the world health organization recommends, and unsustainable economically. China is now running up against diminishing returns to its investment and export led growth model.

New global competitors, mainly cities in Southeast Asia and Africa, are forcing

factory China metros to help transition the country from being the world's low-cost manufacturing option to an economic model that competes as much on value and quality as it does on cost. In these ways, factory China metros serve as an important bellwether for the nation as a whole since many of China's most pressing economic and environmental challenges must be overcome in cities like Hefei, their actions bear watching. I'm Joseph Parilla; you can find this report on our website at Brookings.edu.

DEWS: You can find more metro lens pieces on our Soundcloud channel. Hey listeners, we have a new ask-an-expert feature in this podcast; if you have a question you'd like to ask an expert, you can send an email to BCP@brookings.edu. If you attach an audio file, I'll play it on the air. And that does it for this edition of the Brookings Cafeteria brought to you by the Brookings Podcast Network. Special thanks this week to Adrianna Pita, host of the Intersections podcast. My thanks also to audio engineer and producer Gaston Reboredo, with assistance from Mark Hoelscher. Vanessa Sauter is the producer. Bill Finan does the book interviews, and design and web support comes from Jessica Pavone, Eric Abalahin, and Rebecca Visor. And thanks to David Nassar and Richard Fawal for their support. You can subscribe to the Brookings Cafeteria on iTunes and listen to it in all the usual places. Until next time; I'm Fred Dews.