THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

DEMOCRACY'S RESILIENCE: IS AMERICA'S DEMOCRACY THREATENED?

Washington, D.C.
Tuesday, May 1, 2018

Bright Line Watch Survey Findings:

SUSAN STOKES
John S. Saden Professor of Political Science, Yale University
Co-Director, Bright Line Watch

Moderators:

GRETCHEN HELMKE
Professor, University of Rochester
Co-Director, Bright Line Watch

ELAINE KAMARCK
Senior Fellow and Director, Center for Effective Public Management
The Brookings Institution

Panelists:

E.J. DIONNE, JR.
W. Averell Harriman Chair and Senior Fellow, The Brookings Institution
Author, One Nation After Trump

WILLIAM A. GALSTON
Ezra K. Zilkha Chair and Senior Fellow, The Brookings Institution
Author, Anti-Pluralism: The Populist Threat to Liberal Democracy

STEVEN LEVITSKY
Professor, Harvard University
Author, How Democracies Die

THOMAS MANN
Senior Fellow, The Brookings Institution
Author, One Nation After Trump

YASCHA MOUNK
Lecturer, Harvard University
Author, The People vs. Democracy

DANIEL ZIBLATT
Professor, Harvard University
Author, How Democracies Die

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. KAMARCK: Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to Brookings. We have a quite extraordinary panel and discussion for you today. We are co-sponsoring this event with Bright Line Watch, which you'll hear about in a moment, so this is a partnership between Brookings and Bright Line Watch. And we are here today to ask an extraordinary question. When we think about the questions that have come up after other presidential elections, I can't remember a presidential election when a year later we were asking the question is America's democracy threatened? That's not usually what we ask after our elections, but we are asking that after this one.

And it's being discussed in four rather extraordinary books which are for sale right out there for those of you interested. The first one is by our very own E.J. Dionne and Tom Mann and Norm Ornstein -- Norm's next door -- called "One Nation After Trump." The second is by our very own William Galston. The third is by Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, both of Harvard University, called "How Democracies Die." And the fourth by Yascha Mounk, also at Harvard, called "The People vs. Democracy." All four of these books take on the question that we're here to talk about today, which is the state of America's democracy and is it, in fact, threatened in the second year of this most extraordinary presidency that we have ever had.

We're going to begin today with a presentation by Susan Stokes, the latest in a series of surveys that Bright Line Watch has been conducting about this very question, the state of American democracy. And Susan's going to talk to us for a couple of minutes. I think you have some slides, Susan? Show us show slides. And then she'll call up the panelists, the authors, to the stage. And we'll have some discussion among ourselves and some questions for all of you.

So, again, thank you very much for coming. I'm Elaine Kamarck. I'm a senior fellow here at Governance Studies and I hope you enjoy this afternoon. Susan? (Applause)

MS. STOKES: Good afternoon. Thank you very much, Elaine. And yes, I'm Susan Stokes. I'm a professor at Yale, professor of political science at Yale, and I am a co-founding member of Bright Line Watch. Bright Line Watch was founded late in 2016 by myself, Gretchen Helmke of the University of Rochester; Mitch Sanders, our director of survey research; and John Carey and Brendan Nyhan, who are political scientists at Dartmouth.

I just wanted to briefly say, I'm not going to thank everybody who's made today possible and who supports our work, there are too many of you and you know who you are, but I wanted to say thank you very much to the Democracy Fund and to Hewlett Foundation whose Madison Project Initiative has been very supportive of Bright Line Watch. And we are also thanking Yale's Center on International and Area Studies.

Gretchen, Mitch, Brendan, John and I started Bright Line Watch and our mission was and is to bring academic research to bear on questions of democratic resilience and erosion in the United States today. One of our key activities is to conduct surveys to gauge how Americans believe their democracy is faring. In my remarks today I'll lay out what we've learned so far from these surveys.

First let me explain Bright Line Watch's motivation for conducting surveys. We draw our organization's name from the work of Stanford political scientist Barry Weingast. Weingast is interested in how citizens can help safeguard democracy when it is threatened. He identifies two conditions that must hold.

First, there must be wide agreement among citizens that a given principle or right is so crucial that its violation would amount to a fundamental breach of democratic governance. Second, there has to be wide agreement about when the principle has been breached. Principles that meet both of these conditions, agreement on their importance and on when they're breached, are bright lines, bulwarks of democracy.

We wanted to find out whether there are any bright lines in the United States today, so we undertook a series of surveys. Since there are many principles that are

associated with democracy, in our surveys we asked people about a lot of them. We asked 27 questions or we make 27 statements that are related to people's notions of what democracy is about, what it should mean. And then we ask our respondents to rate these principles in terms of how important they see them as being to democracy and how the U.S. is performing on these principles.

I'll go into a few details in a minute, but just to anticipate our key findings the public demonstrates quite a bit of agreement about which principles are really the crucial ones for democracy. This agreement extends even to people who are on opposite sides of partisan and other political divides.

But our worry is that in a highly polarized environment, even when the public appears to agree about these important principles and agree that they're being violated, their interpretations of the nature of the violation and who or what is at fault are miles apart. So these bright lines may not be as much of a bulwark of democracy as we would hope.

Bright Line Watch has conducted five waves of expert surveys of political scientists around the countries and three surveys of the general public. The core of these surveys are statements of democratic principles, as I've just mentioned. To give an example, one principle is that elections are free of fraud. Another is that government protects people's rights to engage in expression even when it's unpopular, and so on.

So the format of our questions, we allow people to give answers on the question of how important principles are. They can say that they're not relevant at all, beneficial, important, or essential to a democracy. And then when we asked them about how well the U.S. is performing on these standards, they can answer the U.S. does not meet the standard, it meets it partly, it mostly meets it, or it fully meets the standard. And the figures that I'm going to show you in a minute are focused on -- are adding together people who say important and essential in terms of the importance question, and who say that the U.S. is mostly or fully meeting the standard.

Now, I'm focusing here on surveys of the public, and in particular I'm drawing

most of the results here from our September 2017 survey of 3,000 American adults which represents a random sample of the larger population. And we actually have a brand new survey that we just conducted in April, this past month, and the report on that survey is actually available on the Bright Line Watch website. And I'll say a couple words about what we learned from that in a minute.

So we think of the divide in our country as very wide between Democrats and Republicans and between supporters and opponents of President Trump. But as you can see here, I hope you can see, there's a good deal of agreement on both sides of the pro and anti-Trump divide. These are the percentages of people responding that a principle is important or essential to democracy. The respondents are broken down by their views of the President with the disapprovers in blue and the approvers in red.

There are some principles that Trump disapprovers place more weight on. For instance, they care more that the executive's authority be checked. They care more that there be no foreign influence in elections and that there be no interference with the press. But on the whole, their rankings are not dissimilar from those of Trump approvers.

We've been looking at people's ratings of which principles are most important and which least crucial to democracy. Now let's look at their evaluations of how well the U.S. is performing. Again, we're breaking this down by approval and disapproval of Trump.

So unlike importance, evaluations of the performance of democracy vary between Trump supporters and opponents, often dramatically. When their views diverge, the Trump supporters are usually much more sanguine about American democracy. You can see that in that they rate the U.S. a lot higher than Trump disapprovers on equality of voting rights, on how well the President's powers are being limited, and on avoiding foreign influence on elections.

Trump approvers and disapprovers do agree on some other principles, ones related to political violence, the need for political leaders to share common understandings of the facts, that investigations not be compromised, and that officials not gain personally from

office.

The principles on which the public agrees tend also to be ones that it ranks as less important for democracy. So these data, as I mentioned, are from our September 2017 survey of the public. We asked these same questions in another public survey that we just concluded, allowing us to track changes, shifts over time from the first into the second year of the Trump presidency.

So what you see here is the results of our 2018 poll are with the darker markings and the results of the September 2017 poll in lighter markings. Let me mention that there was a poll in between in which the differences are somewhat less large. But what you can see is that the public on the whole has become more dispirited.

On no principles that had the percentages saying that the U.S. fully or mostly met this standard increased between these two polls. On many of the principles it declined. I should also mention that we have regularly been polling experts, political scientists across the country, exactly the same kind of questions, and we find that the public is more dispirited in general than our expert political scientists on the performance of American democracy.

Regarding changes from September 2017 to April 2018, the public, for example, was less sure that government does not interfere with journalists or news organizations; the elected branches respect judicial independence; government agencies don't monitor, attack, or punish opponents; and several others.

Now, recall that a few minutes ago I mentioned Barry Weingast's criteria of bright lines that could help protect democracy. In Bright Line Watch's public surveys do we see any possible Weingast style bright lines? These would be principles on which there's a large gap between importance and performance assessments. When there is widespread agreement that the principle is important and that the U.S. is performing badly on it.

So what you have here are responses, sort of average responses, to this long series of questions. And what we're interested in here is principles that fall on the off diagonal. So if there were a kind of real correspondence between importance and evaluation

of performance, then you would expect a kind of -- these standards to fall on a kind of diagonal line, a 45-degree upward sloping line there, showing that I'm actually a professor. And so what we're looking at are ones that sort of fall on the off diagonal, especially down in this sort of lower right-hand portion, which corresponds to statements that people see as important, but on which the U.S. is performing especially badly.

The gap is especially large for the three statements that I've circled there, and those are that there be no private gains from office, investigations of officials are not compromised, and there are sanctions for official misconduct. If you remember a few slides ago, these are principles on which there was not much difference between Trump approvers and disapprovers.

So stepping back we find among the U.S. public some basic principles about which there is broad agreement on their importance to democracy and broad agreement that the U.S. is performing badly on them. That may not seem like particularly good news, but it is from the standpoint of forming bright lines on which people might act to defend democracy.

But here's the less hopeful news and it goes back to the question of a common understanding about the facts. We suspect there is a lack of agreement on interpretations on why the U.S. is performing badly on principles like investigations not being compromised or there being sanctions for misconduct. We suspect that partisans of the two parties and Trump approvers and disapprovers probably have diametrically different diagnoses of how and why democracy is performing badly. The idea of the bright line as a bulwark to democracy is that should it be transgressed, the people would resist. They might resist directly or they might resist through pressure on their elected representatives.

But imagine, for instance, that a large portion of the public thinks that officials are escaping legal sanctions for misconduct. Everyone thinks this is bad, but they disagree about who is transgressing and getting away with it. Trump disapprovers point fingers at the President and his entourage; Trump supporters at members of the prior administration. Where then is the common motive to act?

So bright lines require not just common values, but common understandings of the facts. Unfortunately, we are very far indeed from such shared understandings in America today. Thank you. (Applause)

If our panelists could please come forward.

MS. KAMARCK: Thank you, Susan. And this report can be found online, correct? Under I assume --

MS. STOKES: Bright Line Watch.

MS. KAMARCK: Bright Line Watch, okay, for those of you who'd like a little bit longer time to absorb the slides and the questions, et cetera.

We've got two moderators here. Easy to spot us, we're the two women on the panel. And I'm going to introduce Gretchen Helmke. As Susan said, she is one of the co-founders of Bright Line Watch. She's also a professor at the University of Rochester. And Gretchen and I are going to jump right into questions for the panel. And I'm going to let Gretchen, our guest here at Brookings, have the first question.

MS. HELMKE: Great, thank you so much. This is such an extraordinary opportunity to have all of these distinguished scholars at one table, albeit at a very small table. (Laughter) This group really comprises today's leading intellectuals who are shaping how we think about the state of American democracy and democracies around the world. I know that each of you has given numerous talks about your books, but Brookings and our group at Bright Line really was particularly interested to bring all of you together in this sort of format to be able to have a lively, deep back-and-forth discussion about the status of American democracy, the underlying causes and dynamics that have brought us to this point, and some of the most promising ways that you might envision moving forward.

So the four books share a lot in common. I think it's fair to say that each was motivated in a reaction to the 2016 presidential campaign and to its outcome. But I think also all of them share this sense that the Trump administration is really more of a symptom, albeit also an accelerant, of a deeper set of challenges to liberal democracy and pluralism that has

been taking place in America and around the globe perhaps for decades.

I think, though, that there are also some interesting differences among these books that I'm hoping the discussion today allows us to bring out. So some of those differences are how dire each of you views the level of threat to liberal democracy in America. Also, the extent to which they see this as part of a global recession of democracy or as something more specific to the party within the United States. I also think there are some very interesting differences in terms of the emphases that these books placed on the role of elites versus citizens' attitudes about democracy. And finally, the degree to which the challenges that we're facing are driven by a failure of formal institutions or a breakdown of informal norms.

So I want to start us off today with a general question, and that is almost a year and a half into the Trump administration where each of you thinks we sort of stand now with respect to the level of threat that our democracy is facing. My sense from reading through these books is that Bill's book was much more optimistic than some of the other books about the populist challenge that American democracy is facing and how we stood up to it. At the same time, I think an important point that is made in the *How Democracies Die* by Steve and Dan is that at least when they finished writing this book they said that there was little actual backsliding that had occurred in 2017.

So my question really is what is the nature of the threat that America is facing? And when you concluded your books, how have you updated since the books were published about how America has fared since your books came out?

MR. DIONNE: Well, first of all, it is really heartening for all of us that so many people care passionately about the health of democracy and that you're all here, so thank you. And for me personally, it's a great honor to be with this extraordinary group of colleagues and authors.

I'm going to take off why I think things are as bad as we expected in our book and in some ways worse. What bothers us about the -- you know, what threats do we see?

First, widespread lying on the part of our government, not the occasional lies that politicians always tell. Glenn Kessler, my *Washington Post* colleague, counted the 3,000th lie by the President either today or yesterday. That's worrying.

Secondly, the demonizing of opponents, declaring the opposition somehow illegitimate, threats to your political opponents, I give you only the words "Lock her up."

Third, the decline or the giving over of one branch of government to the power of the other, particularly the legislature ceding its authority to the executive. I think the report from the Republican majority on the Intelligence Committee is a sign of that. Michelle Goldberg today in the *New York Times* talked about the fight being between truth and power, and right now power is winning she argued.

Fourth, the undermining of our legal system. We're seeing that in the firing of Comey and the attacks on Mueller and Rosenstein. Enough said about that.

Money corruption in the government, no tax returns, no separation from the President's business, and various forms of corruption.

Seven, attacks on the free media.

Eight, changing the electoral standards to benefit an incumbent party. We're seeing that with both -- we have seen that over a longer period with gerrymandering and voter suppression.

On the upside, and I'll close with this, I think we are seeing an extraordinary amount of voter participation and mobilization on a level we haven't seen before, the number of people running for office, particularly young people and women; turnout in off-year elections.

So I think that the parts of our democratic system protected by our right to vote to express our grievances and our right to assemble to express our grievances are two very strong bulwarks of democracy, but I'm worried about all those other things.

MR. MOUNK: One of my first rules on any panel is try not to go after E.J. Dionne because he's so damn eloquent. (Laughter) So I've already failed to live up to that.

Let me take the question by dividing between three sort of different broad geographical areas, but also three different areas in terms of how strong democratic institutions are entrenched there.

So the first question is what about countries in which democracy is relatively recent, is not as well established, but in which political scientists until a few decades ago thought that it was safe? Right. So the standard political science assumption a few decades ago was that once you've had a couple of changeovers of government for free and fair elections, once you've had a GDP per capita about $14,000, in today's terms your country is safe. And they thought that democracy was safe in countries like Poland and Hungary.

I think as of the elections in Hungary a few weeks ago, we know that that was wrong. We've now had the first case of a country that has had a couple of -- actually four or five changeovers of government for free and fair elections. But it had a GDP per capita of more than $14,000 in which democracy is essentially no longer in place.

In fact, if you remember Winston Churchill's famous line about the Iron Curtain that is descending from Stettin in north of the continent to Trieste in the south, you can now start in Stettin and the Baltic Sea and drive far further down south to Athens and never leave a country ruled by populists. So there's actually a huge swatch of Central Europe in which populists are taking over and in which many of those countries they really are quite clearly posing an existential threat to democracy. And that situation is looking much worse in Poland, for example, now than it was a year ago.

So the second question is what about the set of countries in Western Europe and some countries outside Europe where democracy has been in place for a long time and we've seen populists rising? I think there the proof is in the pudding. These populist parties have not yet been in power sufficiently and not yet long enough for us to know whether they are going to behave like they are in Poland and Hungary, but there are certainly some worrying signs.

In Italy we've seen the first election in a Western European country in which

populist forces have actually won an outright majority. Thankfully, that majority has been split between different populist parties and we'll see how well they can coordinate. But it is the first time that populist parties have gotten well over 50 percent of the vote in an entrenched democracy. And we will see over the next year what that means once they take power. Will they be able to weaken the judiciary, the free media, and so on in the way that populist governments have proven able to do in Poland and Hungary? Or will there be more resistance against them because democratic norms are more deeply entrenched? We don't know the answer to that question yet.

Finally, looking at the United States, the only real observation I want to make is that if there was a populist Olympiad, Donald Trump would not make medal rank; that people like Viktor Orbán, people like Jaroslaw Kaczynski would be on those top positions on the podium. And that is both positive and negative news because when you look at the extent to which even a relatively unstrategic, even an undisciplined populist who arouses much more opposition than he would need to for the core attacks on liberal democracy has been able to consolidate his control of the Republican Party, turn, as E.J. was saying, some of the other branches of government into his handmaidens, especially the House of Representatives, that is very worrying.

So I think I'm now less worried about Donald Trump than I was a year ago because I think the sheer extent of his incompetence has been proven more fully. But I'm more worried about what would happen to American institutions if at some point we were to elect a competent populist. And unfortunately, looking around the world, there's a lot of those.

MR. GALSTON: Well, I'm tempted to start off exactly the same way Yascha did except to substitute the name Yascha Mounk for the name E.J. Dionne. This is not getting easier. (Laughter)

But let me just say very quickly that with regard to Central and Eastern Europe, I think things are measurably worse than they were and certainly measurably worse

than I expected them to be. There was a wave of journalism right after Emmanuel Macron's astonishing personal and even more astonishing party victory in the middle of 2017 to the effect that the populist wave had crested.

Since then what's happened? The AFD has become Germany's second largest political party. There have been two consecutive populist victories in the Czech Republic, one for president, one for parliament. The Freedom Party has entered the Austrian Coalition. Poland passed its Holocaust law. More than half of Italian voters voted for anti-system populist parties. And of course, Viktor Orbán was returned for a third consecutive term with more public support than he got the second time around and a two-thirds in the parliament. Aside from that, things are going great. (Laughter)

Point two, I'm of the view backed by political science that I trust that there is a big difference between long-established democracies on the one hand and newer democracies on the other. I do not think that the long-established democracies in Western Europe, the UK, or the United States are fundamentally in danger of being displaced by an entirely different form of government, which I cannot say in the case of Hungary, Poland, and perhaps the other nations of the Visegrád group. And that is, I think, generically good news. And I haven't seen anything that's happened so far in any Western European country or the United States to shake my confidence in that generalization.

With regard to the United States, in particular, I cannot say that I'm particularly surprised by anything that's happened since the election because it seems to me we were fully warned during the election campaign about what kind of administration, what kind of President we would have if a Trump presidency were to materialize. I think that our institutions have been subjected, our political institutions, to what Tim Geithner described as a stress test with regard to the nation's largest banks. I personally believe that we are in the process of passing that stress test, which doesn't mean that our institutions have been unharmed in the same way that our banks hardly got off scot free. But they have been recovering. They are now recovered and I have some confidence that American political

institutions will describe the same trajectory. But to hear my reasons why we'll have to wait for subsequent rounds.

MR. MANN: I bring you greetings from the People's Republic of Berkeley. (Laughter) I've bene living out there a little over three years and it looks to me like Berkeley and the great blue state of California, the sixth largest nation in the world, is a hotbed of moderation compared to what we see happening in our national politics. I want to answer sort of those three questions Gretchen raised initially.

How serious is the threat? I would say the threat level is the highest since the Civil War, mainly because it's presented by one of our major political parties and is now in control of the national government and a good number of the state governments. We have seen demagogues, populists, would-be autocrats throughout American history. The historians and the American political development folks have really mapped this over time and it's really quite extraordinary.

We shouldn't burnish our so-called golden history too much because we've been through great times. And some of those times had side effects, like the marginalization and disenfranchisement of blacks for a century after the Civil War. Race has, indeed, played a profound role in our politics. And part of the reason that we're undergoing the threats to our democracy is because of changes in the place of race in American society. And the fact that instead of being pushed off out of sight, out of way, or in effect being responded to by the two major political parties, we now have them absolutely separated with very high incentives to sort of play the race and nativist cards in ways that really pose genuine threats to our politics. So Huey Long and Father Coughlin and Joe McCarthy and George Wallace were problematic figures, but they were more on the fringes of our politics.

One of our major political parties didn't hold the net tight enough and they let through a demagogue and someone remarkably unsuited for the job, but it didn't happen by chance. It happened because of developments in the Republican Party for the last two or three decades and the very kind of anti-system, challenging legitimacy of the political

opposition, denying the existence of facts and truth, being scornful of compromise is something we all wrote about, you know, a couple of decades ago.

This has been happening and underway and it would be foolish to assume everything will work out just fine. I hope it does, but I believe the battle is real to protect our democracy and it won't be solved by the 2018 midterm elections or the 2020 elections. It's a set of problems that go to the sort of socioeconomic makeup and division of our society and its links to the political party system. And we're going to have a hard time dealing with it.

What I will say is if in some ways the problematic position we are in today is a consequence of failures of political elites and political parties to sort of keep such figures out, as the framers were so worried about, we now can say that it will -- if we are to get beyond this and come back to a healthy, working democracy, it's going to be because of not a mobilization of an additional 50 million or 75 million Americans, but probably 2 or 3. That in their efforts of call it resistance or what have you, and operating pragmatically through the only party that's available to them to put an end to the threat, through our election system that we're going to get through it.

So it's an elite mass problem. The elites got us in most of this trouble. And at least in short term it's going to take some electoral action to help us get over it.

SPEAKER: Can you please give us the speakers' names?

MS. HELMKE: Oh, sorry. Okay, go ahead.

MR. MANN: I'm Tom Mann.

MS. HELMKE: Yes.

MR. MANN: Thomas Mann. You've read my fiction. (Laughter)

MS. HELMKE: And right to my left we have E.J. Dionne, Yascha Mounk, Bill Galston, Tom Mann, and then I'll let Daniel introduce himself and speak.

MR. LEVITSKY: Except that I'm not Daniel. (Laughter) I'm Steve Levitsky.

MS. HELMKE: Sorry, I can't see.

MR. LEVITSKY: The lesser known co-author of How Democracies Die.

MR. ZIBLATT: I'm the more handsome one. (Laughter)

MR. LEVITSKY: So we wrote How Democracies Die. Let me lead off by saying that American democracy is not dead and American democracy is not dying. I don't think the collapse or breakdown of U.S. democratic institutions is imminent. That's not for lack of trying. (Laughter) I think that the Trump administration has thus far thrown many more punches than it has landed and it's thought about and even conspired to throw punches that it hasn't thrown.

So, in part, I think Yascha's right that this is in part a product of incompetence and also weakness. It's harder to do as much damage at 40 percent support as it is with 70 or 80 percent support. And also, I think the fact that American democracy, although we should not take it for granted, is hard to kill. Our democratic institutions are pretty robust.

That said, I think it is way too soon to declare that we've passed the stress test. The real test, and I hope it doesn't come, will be in the situation we're in now with a President not committed to democratic and constitutional norms if we face a major security crisis, a terrorist attack, or a war. That's what keeps me awake at night.

It's also the case that particularly countries with strong democratic institutions and strong oppositions like ours, it takes longer to corrode democracy. So I don't think we can draw any definitive conclusions after 16 months.

That said, our democratic institutions remain intact. I do worry, though, about long-term corrosion. And there's nothing or little that's happened over the last 16 months to make me less concerned about this longer term corrosion.

The level of polarization, partisan polarization in this country is more intense than any time since Reconstruction, since the end of Reconstruction. And that level of polarization can kill democracies. We've seen it in other places in history in other parts of the world.

And the other thing that worries is changes in public opinion. There's a lot of

-- those who are less concerned about Trump's behavior often point to the fact that much of what he does is all talk. It doesn't go beyond the Twitter feed. But there's growing evidence that Trump's talk is shaping public opinion. And the number of Americans who now believe that the media is, in fact, conspiring to bring down the government and the number of Americans, particularly Republicans, who now would tolerate or support laws to punish media who are deemed to publish inaccurate information has grown stunningly high. The number of Americans who believe our elections are fraudulent and are willing to tolerate action to even suspend, push back elections on the grounds that they are not under free and fair conditions has also risen dramatically. So that doesn't mean democracy has died, but it does mean that there's a bigger constituency today for some kind of authoritarian maneuver than there was a few years ago.

MR. ZIBLATT: All right, so I go last. I'm Ziblatt, so I'm used to going last, I'll admit. (Laughter) Ever since kindergarten, in fact, I was always at the back of the line. (Laughter) So appropriate position here.

So one thing that kind of runs through everything that everybody has said, we often have this vision of democracies around the world in crisis. There's lots of evidence of that. But we have kind in our minds an implicit metaphor that it's a little bit like global warming, that things are just getting worse. There's rising tides of disaffection, rising levels of inequality. We have to stop these tides and we need to take dramatic action in order to stop these tides.

I would like to suggest a different metaphor, which is what we're living through may be more like an earthquake, less like global warming. Earthquakes come and go. They happen for reasons. There's deep tectonic plates at work. You know, we can identify the reasons they're happening. But often, and in the spirit in a bit of Tom's presentation or comments, often these are sort of short-term causes. Political elites may make mistakes, somebody gets through, and we now face a serious crisis. Earthquakes can be deadly, they can kill many people. I think the crisis we confront right now is genuinely

serious.

But instead of thinking about that there may be deep-seated, transformational reforms necessary, you know, in some areas certainly this is the case, I think we should think about how to build up our current institutions to withstand the shock and to get through the crisis. In many ways, I think the main challenge we face is how to get through this crisis without making mistakes and to get through this crisis with our institutions intact and with some incremental changes perhaps.

And if we think that the world has been fundamentally changed and the old rules no longer apply, there's the temptation, I guess, for dramatic reforms and dramatic changes. And some of these may be necessary, but there's also a danger in that.

So I guess my point is to just simply suggest that perhaps our institutions, at least in the United States, are not in deep, deep crisis. On the other hand, we face some serious challenges. And so we need to build up the strength of our parties. We need to think about new forms of civic education and try to strengthen our institutions. But I think our institutions can get through this earthquake.

MS. KAMARCK: Thank you. Gretchen, if I may, I'd like to follow up and actually, Yascha, you made the point that I was going to turn into a question here, so I'm going to ask others to respond. In E.J. and Tom's book they have this great phrase that Trump has a penchant for authoritarianism, which I think is very well said because that's kind of where he is. From what he says we know that's what he'd like to do.

But we also have seen that he's not very good at this business of government. He's inexperienced. He doesn't know much about policy. He's not very adept.

So I'm going to ask for a thought experiment from the authors here. Imagine in the future a candidate, a President with a penchant for authoritarianism, who has the bureaucratic expertise and authority of former Vice President Dick Cheney and who has former Chief of Staff Jim Baker as his chief of staff, probably two of the most skilled bureaucratic players Washington has ever seen. What would that look like?

SPEAKER: Trouble.

MS. KAMARCK: Trouble. (Laughter) Trouble. Maybe we don't need to say anything else.

MR. DIONNE: Why don't we start with the Z?

MR. ZIBLATT: Yeah, okay, I'm not used to this. Okay, so, yeah, you know, that's certainly a scary scenario. I guess at some level counterfactuals have to be realistic. And I guess I wonder to what degree -- I mean, part of the challenge that Donald Trump poses and outside insurgents pose in general is that they are outside insurgents. They're not professional politicians. They don't play by the normal rules, and that's part of their appeal. So I wonder the degree to which that actually is a scenario that could exist.

I mean, in some sense, I tend to think that -- you know, I sort of think of Max Weber's politics is vocation. I mean, to be a politician at some level is a profession and it requires thinking about not only ultimate ends, as Weber put it, but about the kind of politics and responsibility and the consequences of one's actions.

And so I think, you know, whatever one thinks of Dick Cheney and James Baker, these are people who've had long careers in politics and are not going to try to blow up the system. And so at some level I'm dodging the question, but I think there's a genuine way in which professional politicians represent less of a threat.

MS. HELMKE: Okay, fair enough. Should we go in order or --?

MR. GALSTON: No, let's jump around. (Laughter)

MS. HELMKE: Okay, jump around, right.

MR. GALSTON: I want to hear what they say.

MR. DIONNE: I think Dan's right about who has a history of doing what. I think a lot depends on what is happening in the country after Trump. In other words, in trying to think about what we've all grappled with in our books, I like Dan's earthquake metaphor, but there is also a sense of a tide metaphor, that democracies have faced a series of challenges from globalization, from technological change, from the resulting economic

inequalities and insecurities. Even relatively egalitarian countries in Europe, that is to say countries more egalitarian than ours in economics, nonetheless also have sharp regional divergences where Le Pen did very well in aging industrial parts of France; the alternative for Germany did well in some conservative parts of Germany, but also particularly well in the East, which has suffered more economically. And then we have had the issue of immigration, which Bill's book underscores as a particularly important piece of what is going on.

If we do not do anything about the existing inequalities, if we do not do anything to make those people in our society who have reason to feel very insecure economically or angry economically, then I think your thriller scenario of a set of competent authoritarians is very dangerous. I think a lot depends on what we do about these problems.

Just want to make one other quick point. Yascha and I have been arguing about this I think for six months. I've had the great pleasure to be with him on a number of occasions. I think we need to accept and just put on the table that populism is an essentially contested word because some people, particularly in Europe, use it as a negative to refer to authoritarian movements. Jan-Werner Müller wrote a very good book arguing that populism really means defining the people in an exclusionary way. These are the people, everyone else is outside.

There are other views of populism that see it as a potentially democratic force. Our own populist movement I think helped lead to the reforms of the progressive and New Deal eras.

So I just want to argue very briefly, and then we can drop the subject altogether, to make distinctions between types of populism.

MR. MOUNK: I would make the distinctions between types of populism, more sort of bear in mind there was two different meanings to it, right? I mean, I think that the way in which I talk about populism, and I think most of the authors on the panel, is a set of movements that claim that they alone stand for the people and that everybody who

disagrees with them is in some deep and important sense illegitimate.

Now, it's possible to have a robustly left wing economic agenda and not fall foul to those kinds of shortcomings. And so in the history of sort of American politics, some of those people might have been called populists. We have might have some people who are sometimes called populists today, who absolutely acknowledge the opposition as being legitimate. The kinds of populists who I'm worried about, and I think most of the panel, including you, are worried about, are people who don't do that; who say if you disagree with me on this, you are really standing against the people because I am the voice of the people, as a certain somebody said a few years ago.

I think there's two big questions on the table which are important questions. The first is about the earthquake and the second is about what happens if somebody comes back who has more discipline than somebody like Donald Trump?

So on the earthquake, you know, I hope that this is a real long-lasting earthquake, but it's a very long earthquake. Right? And I think when you just look at 2016, the year in which Britain voted to leave the European Union and America voted for Donald Trump, it's easy to think of that as this bizarre annus horribilis, this was that terrible year in which all of these horrible things happened. But actually populism has been rising for a long time. I think it's been rising for a long time in the Republican Party in the United States, when you look at some of the people who had briefly enjoyed great fortunes in the primaries and then subsided, and it's quite clearly been rising for a long time in Europe.

So with some colleagues in London I showed that the average vote share of populist parties in Europe was 8 percent in the 2000 and it's over 25 percent now. And it has been rising pretty gradually long before 2016, long before the start of the financial crisis in 2008. And by the way, it's kept rising since 2016.

So when you look at that, I think it looks more like a seismic shift which is explained by -- and here I know our books overlap a lot -- by a set of long-term structural drivers, which in the terms of my book, *People vs. Democracy*, are a long-term stagnation of

living standards for ordinary citizens; the slow transformation of countries that either were monoethnic or monocultural or at least had a strict racial and religious hierarchy into increasingly equal multiethnic societies and the backlash against that; and then the rise of social media.

So that leads us to the third question. And I actually want to slightly broaden the premise. Right? Because in your premise it was just about, you know, smart bureaucratic operators. I think it makes a huge difference, and I disagree with Dan on this, I think you see populists around the world who have radicalized over the course of a time in office and who are incredibly good bureaucratic operators. I mean, just in terms of knowing how to use state capacity in order to accomplish their goals, people like Recep Erdoğan in Turkey, people like Viktor Orbán in Hungary are very good. They're every bit as good, frankly, as some of the more democratic leaders I prefer in Western Europe at the moment.

So I think the idea of it's impossible to have those populist figures who also are smart, competent, bureaucratic managers is sadly a mistake. But I'll go beyond that. I think one of the reasons why Donald Trump is stuck at the remarkably high level, by the way, of popular support, about 41 percent, is that he picks a whole bunch of fights that are own goals for him. Right? You don't have to be paying certain people $130,000 for your personal lawyer. That's not part of what it is to be a populist. But you also don't have to refuse to take side between neo-Nazis and people protesting neo-Nazis.

So I think that there is an ideologically adjacent version of populism which renounces straight-out racism in a much clearer way; which may, by the way, even be represented by somebody who's themselves in some salient way a member of a minority, either sexual or ethnic or religious; but that in just the same way says either you are for us and then you're legitimate or you really need to be quashed.

And my biggest nightmare is somebody who is much more competent than Trump, a little bit more ideologically moderate than Trump, who may actually themselves be Latino, but still hate African Americans or African American and hate Latinos. There's many

different ways of dividing up that pie. And then I think the United States could be in real trouble.

MR. GALSTON: Three points very quickly. First of all, in what may be a futile effort to mediate between E.J. and Yascha here, although my book was very critical of populism, there is an upside to populism when it puts on the public agenda questions, important and valid questions, that were previously excluded from the agenda. The downside of populism is that it almost never provides workable and decent answers to the questions that it puts on the table. (Laughter)

Point number two, there's been a battle of metaphors. (Laughter) You know, so far I've heard --

SPEAKER: Those are the worst.

MR. GALSTON: So far I've heard global warming, earthquakes, corrosion, tides, maybe I've missed one, but --

SPEAKER: Tornado.

MR. GALSTON: Yeah, but in the spirit of the occasion let me put my own metaphor on the table because I think in a weird way it's more hopeful. That metaphor is infection. Okay? And one of the key things about infection is that it stimulates the formation of antibodies. And if the infection is not too strong to overwhelm the body and kill it, then the spread of those antibodies can have a profoundly healing effect. And I would argue that there are signs underway in the grass-roots of America, and not just there, that democratic antibodies are not only forming, but strengthening.

Here's my third point which is a direct response to Elaine's challenge. Let me put two words on the table. The first one is Richard and the second one is Nixon. (Laughter) Okay.

Now, you know, Richard Nixon was a sort of insider outsider. He knew the mechanism of government to a fare-thee-well, but he nurtured resentments that were classic populist resentments. If you go back to his acceptance speech in the 1968 presidential -- in

the Republican Convention, a classic, quietly populist, dog whistle speech. And he proved willing to try to break some of the most fundamental norms of American democracy. Okay, so you have this wily experienced man with the willingness to break those norms, and he didn't get away with it.

Now, maybe things are so much worse now than they were 44 years ago, and just to head off some objections of the past, the Republican Party supported Richard Nixon until very late in the game in 1974. It wasn't as though a whole bunch of virtuous people rose up. They defended him for partisan reasons that I can understand until there was the famous smoking gun. So how different are things now?

MS. HELMKE: And by the way --

MR. MOUNK: And can I have just a one-sentence objection? I promise it's just one sentence. It's true that there's some dog-whistle politics that Richard Nixon was very guilty of, but by and large his attacks on democratic rules and norms was covert. The striking thing about Donald Trump's attacks on them is just how blatant and overt they are.

MS. HELMKE: And let me just point out after Bill's point that at the very end when Richard Nixon resigned, he had 25 percent approval ratings. Okay. Presidents don't go down to zero, okay. He was at 25 percent.

Go ahead, Tom. Oh, I think Steve wanted -- oh, Steve, go ahead.

MR. LEVITSKY: Yeah. On the last point I think we're in a completely different world relative to 1974. The level of partisan polarization is so much more intense. And I agree entirely with Yascha's point that many of our key democratic norms were much stronger then, such that Nixon had to behave covertly in ways that Trump does not have to now. So I think our institutions responded well to Nixon. I'm not terribly confident they can respond in a similar way today.

I wanted to defend my co-author's earthquake metaphor a little bit. (Laughter) And although I'm with Yascha on the populism debate and how to define it, I'm not entirely sure either Erdoğan or Orbán are entirely populist. Both of them are career

politicians. That's why they wield institutions so effectively.

And there is something to Daniel's point that what it takes is a populist to win the United States is amateurism. And there is some, not a perfect one, but some tradeoff between being an insider able to manipulate the nuts and bolts of American politics and the ability to win election as a populist.

But more importantly, it is possible -- as Yascha points out, it is impossible to rule out Yascha's nightmare scenario of a populist with a mixed-race coalition, who would be devastatingly more dangerous than Trump. It's impossible to rule that out. I do think it's pretty unlikely.

In the history of the United States, the vast majority and the easiest and most effective populist appeals over and over and over again for more than century have been white nationalists. And I think it's very likely that the most dangerous, the most authoritarian populist appeals in this country will continue to be white nationalists, and that is scary as hell. But there is a sense in which, at least in the United States, I cannot speak for Europe, but in the United States I think the earthquake metaphor applies.

I think that electorally in -- one cannot say these things with certainty, but it is quite likely that in a generation or so a white nationalist appeal will be effectively nonviable. And that it's -- a lot of us hoped that it was nonviable in 2016. We were clearly wrong for some of the reasons that E.J. and Tom point out in their book, these sort of anti-majoritarian nature of some of our institutions. One can win national elections with a white populist -- white nationalist appeal with 40 percent support. But in the medium run, the medium to long run, that's not a viable electoral strategy in the United States. We're simply too diverse and so we need to ride out this.

And so this earthquake, it's not one year. It could be 15, 20 years. It's a long earthquake we have to ride out and not make mistakes in. But I do think it may be an earthquake.

MS. KAMARCK: So I wanted to pivot the discussion a little bit away from

diagnosing democracy to some of the underlying causes of what's going on. And in several of the books I think there is this common idea that the bargain between citizens and elites that makes liberal democracy work has been broken. And I think Bill Galston puts this very clearly in terms of politicians are meant to deliver growth and security, and citizens have tended to reward them with trust and the delegation of political power. And so a question that I'd like to pose to all of the panelists here is sort of what in your view has led to this bargain breaking down and how and whether it can be restored?

And then just because people have a lot to say, I want to just add on an additional kind of related question, which is in thinking about the causes I think also the books are grappling with the relative weight of economic factors versus cultural factors. And as opposed to asking them to sort of pick their favorite candidate, I wanted to hear more about how culture and the economy interact in their minds to produce this kind of populist backlash.

MR. DIONNE: I think, Tom, you got passed the last time, so it's your question.

MR. MANN: So I can't avoid it this time, eh? (Laughter) It's a wonderful question and it's been a bone of contention in post-election analyses and there are people who are determined now to say the economy was irrelevant to it because there are -- if you use three or four indicators of personal economic wellbeing, they don't hold up very well in the face of a set of racial, cultural status threats really. Diana Mutz has done sort of a state-of-the-art paper on this that's in the proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. But I think in the end tries too hard for the either/or and feels as if it's entirely a threat to one's status and future.

But it doesn't take much reading of Vance's book or a number of our colleagues' books to see how much sort of economic wellbeing changes over time, nature of future opportunities within one's particular community, senses allied into feelings of others are making out like bandits and they're not real Americans. And I think that's what we're up at.

I mean, let's do another counterfactual that the period of economic stagnation and the great financial crisis and recession never occurred. We just kept our post World War II period of growth. We had 4 percent or so growth that was fairly evenly shared across the income quintiles, that adjustments were made to changes in technology and globalization that we sort of took care of those who got squeezed by these developments, and there were resources within the society to pay for them. You know, I think it would be a very different situation. We would have been in a better position to say handle the larger amount of immigration. We moved from 4-1/2 percent to 14 or 15 percent over a couple of decades. And it's a little more complicated in all parts of Europe because of the refugee crisis. But you could imagine a counterfactual in which you would say these cultural, racial factors would have been dampened. But it was, in fact, the underlying economic conditions that created the opportunity for candidates, too, to play on these others, feeling the difficulty or articulating the problems that people face.

So the bottom line is that it's really hard governing a multiracial, multiethnic, multicultural society in which a portion of that society feels itself outnumbered, at least in the future, and suffering, whether true or not, as a consequence of that. We don't have examples I think around the world of such successes, so it's bound to be difficult.

But I would submit if the economic conditions were different that the pressure on the cultural would be vastly diminished.

MR. MOUNK: Yeah, I agree with that entirely. I'm afraid to say that in this pretty artificial debate in my mind some of the worst of political science is on display. Some of the worst of public journalism is on display. And the two perfectly complement each other. (Laughter)

So some of the worst in political science is to throw a bunch of variables at something, do a regression, and tell you what (inaudible) behind it. And nobody who is in any way subtle about the nature of the cause of populism would predict the thing that's going to drive a vote for a populist is just straightforward wage distribution, and the less money you

have, the more you're going to vote for a populist. Nobody who has any sophisticated model of the world would predict that.

If you've read a little bit of history, if you have a little bit of a sense of how that might go, you might say things like, well, it's often middle and lower middle classes who feel that their economic future is threatened who are most likely to vote whether it is for democratic parties a hundred years ago or for populists today. That turns out to hold up reasonably well.

You might say that often economic anger and a sense of being betrayed by elites because you're not doing very well economically is going to take cultural form. That if you feel like you know what, I'm doing twice as well as my parents did, my kids are going to do twice as well as me and, oh, look, there's an immigrant coming in over there and he's doing pretty well, too, well, good for him. Whereas if you feel that I've worked hard all my life and have much to show for it, my kids are probably going to do worse than me, why is my boss an immigrant? Why is my neighbor an immigrant who seems to be doing better than me? What's that all about? You're going to be angry about it. Right.

So these two things go together. And I really think you have to look at the different ways in which a huge swatch of a population is now threatened in the role that they think they're going to play in the society. And part of that is about having real confidence that the future is assured economically and that their kids are going to do better than them. Part of that is absolutely about the transformation from a more monoethnic, monocultural to a multiethnic country, which some people have something real to lose from. And, I mean, we have to take that seriously without for a moment condoning it. Right?

If you think of a country like Sweden or Italy, if you weren't the richest guy in that country 50 years ago, you weren't the best allocated guy, you didn't perhaps have the most social respect, it was very tempting to say, well, you know, at least I'm Swedish rather than Finnish. And at least I'm part of a native majority rather than one of those immigrants coming in from Asia or from Africa.

So once your boss might be from there, once the person representing you in parliament might be from there, you lose something real. You lose the status advantage you had over a salient other group in society. And managing that, I think, is a very complicated, very important thing.

Now, one thing in this debate, and there we go from a political science end of it to a public discourse end of it, has always puzzled me, which is that often the people who most loudly say it's all about race and immigration and if you deny that, then, you know, implied actually you're sort of politically suspect. One thing I don't get about that is that I think actually the forms of the debate are very confused. Right? Which is to say that if you want to be able to build a coalition in which we absolutely stand up with footnote and without reservation for some of the minorities in our country that really aren't a threat right now, you have to also think that you're able to win some of your fellow citizens over to be on your side of the debate.

And if you think that the reason why they voted for Donald Trump is just because white Americans are racists and they're always going to be racists and there's nothing to be done about it, then perhaps you can wait for the inevitable demographic majority which supposedly is going to come 30 years from now, but it's going to be a pretty bit of 30 years. Whereas if you think that actually, no, people also care about some of the economic things and if you manage to give them a vision of a country in which we absolutely defend people against attack, but we also emphasize what we have in common across racial and ethnic dividing lines and we talk about how things are going to get better for you, then we might actually be able to build a broader coalition and win that.

So I think that there's a little bit of confusion going on there where some of the people are most insistent that the only reason here is racism and immigration aren't thinking through what the implications of that actually would be. Because if you really believe that, then at least for over the next 15 or 20 years you should probably be complicit with some attacks on minorities because you've got to win some of those racists white voters in

order to not see Trump reelected. I reject that simplistic analysis.

MR. DIONNE: Go ahead, Bill.

MR. GALSTON: Where to proceed from here. I'm going to try to put this point, you know, as cautiously and precisely as possible.

There is a tendency which has a venerable history to think of economics as the base and culture as the superstructure. I think we have to be open to the possibility of not just the relative but absolute autonomy of cultural considerations, which is not to say that the two can't interact, which is not to say they can be surgically separated. But I think it's not the worst of political science, but the best of political science that has found a strong and independent role for the fear of cultural displacement in recent democratic history and the tip of that spear is negative reactions to the way elites have managed the immigration issue.

There are a number of very good studies about the United States, including two superb panel studies, which means you take a look at the same people over time so you can really make some very precise statements about why they're doing what they're doing, that have found a very powerful independent effect of responses to immigration, on voting propensities. There have bene excellent studies of the Brexit vote in the United Kingdom that have reached exactly the same conclusion.

And, you know, moving from statistics to inspecting what's before our eyes, I think it's obvious that Angela Merkel's honorable but poorly judged decision in the spring of 2015 to open the door to more than a million asylum seekers transformed the political situation in Europe; allowed the AFD to go from a minor party grumping about the euro to Germany's second largest party; allowed the former Northern League whose platform previously was uniting South Tyrol and North Tyrol, you know, a great 19th century issue if I ever heard one, to go from 4 percent of the vote in 2013 to 18 percent in 2018 and become Italy's largest party on the right. Viktor Orbán was on the ropes in 2014 until he alertly seized on the door that Angela Merkel had opened to revive his political fortunes.

And having said that, I think the economic driver has also been very powerful

in the rise of populism, but we have to understand what it is.

MS. HELMKE: Let's --

MR. GALSTON: Whoa, whoa, whoa.

MS. HELMKE: I'm sorry.

MR. GALSTON: I have one more point to make and I've been very patient. (Laughter)

MR. MOUNK: We finally have some disagreement.

MR. GALSTON: Yes. (Laughter) You know, the real economic problem that is fueling the rise of populism is not interpersonal inequality. It's interregional inequality. It is the geographical split between the large, diverse, highly educated, metropolitan areas that are surging ahead and in country after country the small towns and rural areas that are falling behind. That was the same and we have to think very hard about the geography of inequality if we hope to address the problem.

MS. KAMARCK: All right. Let's --

MR. MOUNK: Could I come in?

MS. KAMARCK: Let's have a quick comment by E.J. and Yascha, and then down at the other end of the table you guys haven't been in here, so let's do that because I'm worried about getting enough time in for the audience. Okay?

MR. DIONNE: Just for the record, my dear Social Democrats are still number two. The AFD is the third largest party.

MR. ZIBLATT: They have 12 percent of the vote.

MR. DIONNE: They're not --

MR. ZIBLATT: Let's not get out of hand here.

MR. GALSTON: Not by public opinion they aren't. By seats in parliament maybe.

MR. DIONNE: No, by popular -- in the last election.

MR. ZIBLATT: The last election and the vote share they're the third

strongest party.

MR. GALSTON: I'm talking --

MR. MOUNK: In most of the recent polls, as well.

MR. DIONNE: Well, anyway, we can argue about that later.

MR. GALSTON: We sure can.

MR. DIONNE: I want to put something on the table we don't talk about enough, and I include myself in that "we," because we talk a lot about the Trump vote as a working class phenomenon and everyone's obsessed with the white working class. A statistic: 59 percent of college-educated white men voted for Donald Trump; 90 percent of Republicans voted for Donald Trump; 80-some percent of self-identified conservatives voted for Donald Trump. He was the mainstream Republican conservative candidate in the last election and his base was the traditional Republican vote, some of which was working class, some of which were those college-educated white men who are not particularly well represented on this particular panel today. (Laughter)

And I just think that's very important because it also -- think about another case, which is the French case, where the French mainstream right did not support the radical nationalist candidate. Now, granted, Marine Le Pen was a third party candidate, not a candidate of the mainstream right. Nonetheless, the mainstream right essentially rallied to Emmanuel Macron to keep Le Pen out of power, which is not what happened here.

Now, the working class is very important in swinging key states because of our flawed, in my view, Electoral College system. So it's not that the working class doesn't matter.

Very quickly, if you look at issues that move people there is -- it's all in a context. It's economic change and globalization, it's immigration, it is terrorism and I think terrorism is underrated as a force pushing votes toward anti-immigrant nationalists, law and order style candidates. And all this leads -- and here I think Yascha and Bill do have something in common so I want to bring them together, particularly on the regional

inequalities, which I think all of us agreement are very important. It creates a sense of displacement, a sense of insecurity, a sense of injustice tinged with nostalgia.

Now, the problem, and this is the last point I'll make, I think the problem with this is it race, culture, immigration, or is it economics is what Tom said earlier, that everything happens in a context. A booming, more egalitarian economy, I think, would produce less reaction, more openness, immigration becomes a tougher issue at a time of economic stress.

But lastly, we can't walk away from the fact that there have been racially motivated votes in the United States of America since at least 1856; that race is a deeply powerful force in our elections. It played a particularly important role in this election because Trump, unlike Romney and unlike McCain, made explicit racial appeals, and those did have an impact.

So the closing point that when we did our book all the studies based on polls showed that the election was about race, immigration, and culture. All the studies based on geography showed that it was based on economics because the places that swung to Trump were not the highest unemployment, but they were the places where there was the most economic distress and change. I think the two went together.

MS. KAMARCK: Yascha, quickly, so we can get to the other end of the table and get to our audience.

MR. MOUNK: This end of the table is hogging the conversation.

MS. KAMARCK: Yeah. (Laughter)

MR. DIONNE: It's a regional disparity. (Laughter)

SPEAKER: You're going to have a backlash.

MR. MOUNK: Let me bring out --

MS. KAMARCK: Quickly.

MR. MOUNK: -- very quickly the things on which we agree, which is, A, that the economy matters, but if you just look at individuals you're not going to see it. You have to look at geography. You know, Donald Trump won something like a little over one-third of

America's GDP, but he won nearly two-thirds of America's counties. Right? You are much more likely to vote for populist candidates if there's been less economic investment in your part of the country, if there's fewer higher qualified people there, and so on and so forth. So there's a huge number of things that clearly correlate with that.

It's also very clear that the culture matters and that, as you should expect, a set of countries were founded with this monoethnic and monocultural conception of themselves or as in the United States that have also been multiethnic, but that always gave huge advantages to one racial and ethnic group. As those advantages are being challenged it's getting more difficult. And by the way, we should pause for just one second to note that for all of the horrible things that have been going on in the last two years, it's undoubtedly better to be a member of just about any minority group in the United States today than 20 or 40 or 60 years ago, and shouldn't surprise us that there is a backlash against that wonderful development.

I do disagree about Angela Merkel, which is to say that that certainly accelerated the rise of these forces in certain ways, but I think you put it a little too simplistically. So the Northern League mayors in the north of Italy were running wide Christmas campaigns in which they vowed to remove illegal immigrants from the towns well before Angela Merkel decided to make her decisions on the refugee crisis.

The best-selling nonfiction book of Germany's post-war history was before Angela Merkel decided to make her decision on the immigrant crisis, and it was a book arguing that Turkish immigrants are less smart than German natives, they have more children, and so Germany's abolishing itself, broadly speaking. The depth of the -- and most importantly, when you look at how far far-right populists have been rising actually over the last few years and not an obvious inflexion point, and 2016 is not an obvious inflexion point and 2008 is not an obvious inflexion point, it's been rising in a pretty steady way for 20 years.

So this certainly put some accelerant into the mix. It's certainly something that rising populist parties talk a lot about, but I don't think it's the cause of it.

MS. KAMARCK: Okay, now let's get to the geographical disparity here at the other end.

MR. ZIBLATT: This comes back to the earthquake versus climate change point. You know, we tend to try to explain the current event that, you know, we're in this new era of globalization, of increasing inequality, increased immigration. So Donald Trump's approval rating, what, 38 percent or whatever it is now? Forty? George Wallace in 1968 had a 35 percent approval rating. You know, this is three years after the immigration law passed, 1965, several years after the Voting Rights and the Civil Rights Act passed. So there's a long history, as E.J. pointed out, of racist demagogues running for office with huge amounts of popularity.

Joseph McCarthy had 40 percent approval ratings in the 1950s. Huey Long had 35, 40 percent approval ratings in the 1930s. Henry Ford in the 1920s, before there were opinion polls, considered running for president and was quoted by Hitler in Mein Kampf and praised adoringly as a wonderful anti-Semite, "our Heinrich Ford" as he called him.

So the point here is are we really in a new world where there's a kind of conspiracy of globalization and immigration that we have to fundamentally rethink these things or is this a kind of long enduring tradition in American life? In moments of economic crisis certainly these things are exacerbated. I'm not denying that there are sort of deep trends at work, but the point is how do we -- my general takeaway, and I think Steve's as well, is how do we build our institutions to keep these guys out of power?

And so I guess I'm guilty of Yascha's point. You know, these guys are racists, so how do we keep them out of power? And of course, there's longer term work that needs to be undertaken, but, you know, I think it's important to not be ahistorical about this and to identify these long continuities in American history.

MR. LEVITSKY: Can I add one thing? So in agreement with Daniel, you know, without denying the import of rising inequality and the fact that the bottom 40 percent in our society have seen their incomes stagnant since 1975 whereas the top 5 percent have

seen their incomes nearly double, this stuff matters. But Daniel is absolutely right, there has been a current of support for authoritarian demagogues in this country for a good century or more.

The major differences, arguably, between 2016 and previous periods are, one, the Republicans actually nominated one of these guys whereas in the past our parties always kept these guys far from the centers of power. And two, a more long-term point that I think should be inserted in this debate is the way that our party system has realigned itself over the last 40 years, whereas in the past, in the George Wallace era, there were a lot of angry, working-class, white folks in 1968. A lot of them and a lot of them supported George Wallace, almost as many as supported Donald Trump today. Not a huge difference.

The difference is that back in 1968, the angry, working-class, white folks were evenly distributed between the two parties. And now the angry folks are all clustered in the Republican Party. Not all, but they're heavily clustered in the Republican Party. For the first time in many, many decades the cleavage, the intensity of the conflict has shaped up along party lines, which has given it kind of a different dynamic.

MS. KAMARCK: Okay. We thank you very much. We're now going to go to you guys. And I know there's a lot of questions. I'm going to work this side and that side and try to be even geographically.

Right here. Let's start right here. Yeah, wait till you get a microphone and introduce yourself.

SPEAKER: I identify as being from Wisconsin, so -- and I want to get back to the overarching question about resilience and American democracy. And in Wisconsin, the WikiLeaks dump resulted in a lot of Sanders voters not going to the poll or voting for third parties. And the Koch brothers and other power players ran a lot of commercials and a lot of Internet stuff to suggest Hillary Clinton preferred helping puppies more than babies, that kind of stuff.

So my question to you all is that you haven't mentioned the effect of nation

state interference, as in Russia, or big money players, such as but not limited to the Koch brothers who have enough influence in enough places to influence enough votes to make a difference in enough states.

MS. KAMARCK: Yeah, just a word before we answer. Let's just let one person answer because if all of you answer every question we'll never get a lot of questions.

MR. DIONNE: We'll never leave.

MS. KAMARCK: We'll never leave. (Laughter) So who would like to take this on? (Laughter) Tom, you haven't spoken in a while.

MR. MANN: Well, I'll let E.J. go ahead.

MR. DIONNE: No, no, go ahead.

MR. MOUNK: I think we're being polite. It's not that none of us want to answer the question.

MR. MANN: Listen, the problem -- the reason we've stayed away from this is that the election was so close, you know, 77,000 votes in 3 states as opposed to the popular vote, that you could name a dozen factors that on their own could have made the difference one way or the other.

You're absolutely right about the two factors that you mentioned, but you didn't mention Mr. Comey at all, who played a role in all of this. And so it goes to the peculiar position we're in.

We've now had two elections out of the last five in which the winner of the popular vote lost the electoral vote. And there are reasons to think that that trend will continue. And it's very problematic in a democracy. It shapes the way campaigns are run. It shapes the way in which our elections are vulnerable to outside forces, like the Russians. It presents opportunities in the world, the post *Citizens United* world of super PACs investing in a small number of places to not necessarily persuade voters, but to discourage them from voting and staying home. I mean, there are just so many examples that you could use that make our system vulnerable and that's why most of us talk about the importance of change.

I mean, one thing is the compact for direct popular vote, the state compact, which is a pragmatic way of trying to solve the problem of electing by the Electoral College and is a source of reform efforts around the country.

MS. KAMARCK: Okay, next. Why don't we go here, there, and there? Yeah, the young man there.

MR. FERNANDEZ: Hi, my name is Jonathan Fernandez. I'm a recent graduate of the University of California-Davis (inaudible). I notice that the guiding question of this forum is, "Is America's Democracy Threatened?" And I noticed we talked a lot about European democracies and Brexit, so it's going to be somewhat tangent. I'll just ask the question up front.

What do you think is more important, democracy or liberalism? And you can't have the two.

And the only reason I bring that up is because we talked about Europe. America's democracy is by definition a liberal democracy with separation of powers, et cetera. But we talked about Europe's democracy as possibly being threatened when, in fact, a lot of these populist movements are by their very definition majoritarian and, therefore, democratic. And they're in response to the EU, which is sometimes been described, and you can disagree about the accuracy of this, as having a democratic deficit.

So that's the context I ask this question and I was hoping you'd actually answer this question.

MR. MOUNK: Yeah, I mean, this goes to the heart of some of things I talk about in the book. So, look, I think that what makes our political system legitimate and what's given it extraordinary stability in the last half-century is that it's able to live with two things at the same time. It's able to give people the sense that they get to decide how to live their own lives, individual freedom, and the sense that they get together collectively to determine what the politics looks like, collective self-rule.

There's been an assumption for a long time that these two things naturally go

together, that once you have one in place, the other is going to tend to follow. And once you have both in place, they're locked in. I think that assumption has turned out to be quite wrong.

Now, it is -- in that even once you have one, the other doesn't necessarily follow. And even once you have both, one of them can actually start to slide away, particularly when majorities start to vote for people who actually don't respect individual rights in important ways.

Now, there's one thing that is true to the old thought that they go together, which is that when one starts sliding away, the other is going to tend to give away, as well. One form of that has been I think our political system for a long time hasn't been responsive enough to popular views, that we've lived in what I call in the book a form of riots without effective democracy, a form of undemocratic liberalism in which people have quite rightly felt it doesn't really matter so much what I do and vote. And I do think that one of the many causes of a populist rise is that feeling and is a rebellion against that.

Now, the connection is even more obvious on the other side. There's a debate in which I and a few other scholars are engaged in and presumptively (inaudible) on the other side of that about whether or not the idea of illiberal democracy, of democracy without rights, is a coherent concept. And I argue that it is. That if you want to make sense of something like the Swiss referendum on minarets about seven or eight year ago, in which a majority of Swiss people voted to outlaw the building of the towers that are adjacent to mosques from which you're called to prayer is often done, a lot of people argued that was undemocratic. And I think that's just a confusion of terms. If you have a clear majority of people that are in favor of this, to call it undemocratic is just really confusing. Right? So I think that that is a form of illiberal democracies, a case in which a majority voted to take away key rights of minorities.

Now, what I agree with is that this form of illiberal democracy is very rarely going to be stable. And we see that playing out in Hungary and Poland. My deepest problem

with Viktor Orbán is not that he's anti-Semitic, I mean, I dislike that strongly. My deepest problem is not that I might disagree with him on certain choices he's made on the refugee crisis or anything like that. My deepest problem with him is that he has attacked the independence of Hungarian courts, that he has deprived the rights of many Hungarian journalists, that he has shot against the balance of powers and the separation of powers in ways which means that he's now effectively in control of the electoral system and the way elections are carried out. And as a result, Hungary at this point is no longer an illiberal democracy. It is very radically veering into an electoral dictatorship, into a dictatorship that has a thin veneer of elections, but in which actually it doesn't make sense to call it either a liberal country or a democratic country.

So, look, I'm Jewish. If you ask me whether I would rather live in a country that isn't -- you know, that doesn't give a lot of collective self-determination, but in which minorities are safe, I'd rather live in a country in which we all get to determine what happens collectively, but a bunch of minorities are being sacrificed at the will of the people, I guess I have a sense of which I'm going to be safer in and that I guess is how I jump. But I don't think that either of those is going to work. I think in the end liberalism and democracy stand or fall together, and we need to defend both parts of the political system even if we're only committed to one of them.

MR. DIONNE: Could I just underscore that? Your question was great. It would be great on an exam to ask students. (Laughter) The problem with the question is I so agree with Yascha that liberalism without democracy and I would add a degree of equality cannot sustain itself and would lead to a kind of oligarchy. But democracy without liberalism cannot remain democracy because liberalism is what guarantees the right to open debate, free speech, and the like. And over time that democracy corrodes.

So while you are quite right, they are independent concepts, I share the view that we can't really see them sustained if they don't come together.

MS. KAMARCK: Okay, let's go back to the middle here, that gentleman on

the end of the row. No, behind you, behind you, right there, yeah.

MR. QUANTICA: Thank you. My name is Herschel Quantica. And I'd just like the panel to respond to one concern I have when I attend many of these conversations, which is that the conversation tends to focus on the role of institutions and the role of leaders, political leaders, and the elite, all of which are right at the top. Something that very few people seem to focus on is the role of citizens in a democracy, particularly the values and the culture of the society. That is really at the foundation of any democracy.

When things are good, your institutions can work. When you have someone that everyone likes, maybe a savior like Nehru or Obama comes in, no problem with the leadership. But what happens when you have a bad prince, somebody who comes in who is not democratic? What holds the society up?

And in my experience we haven't been spending as much time and energy or investing enough in developing the quality of the citizenry in a democracy.

Just one more point. Having lived in non-democratic countries, theocratic countries, I worry that if the quality of the citizen isn't completely different from that of someone who lives in Saudi Arabia or China, democracy itself cannot function. Thank you.

MS. KAMARCK: Who would like to -- Bill?

MR. GALSTON: Well, I devoted a significant portion of my life to the cause of civic education and so on one level I'm going to agree with you emphatically. And, of course, you can find all of America's founders issuing statements that sound, with some alterations for and allowances for 18th century diction, very much like yours.

At the same time, institutions really matter because they are bulwarks against those occasions when public opinion goes astray not just on matters of policy, but on much more fundamental questions. For example, in substantial periods of recent American history political science research has discovered that a majority of Americans harbored grave reservations about the Bill of Rights. And during the height of the McCarthy period, but not just then, you had significant numbers who did not think that they applied to the Communist

threat, for example, or a series of other threats.

So you need institutions. You need institutions that can stand up to the vagaries of public opinion. That's what courts are for.

And the idea that we can always rely on public sentiment to save what's most important is, I think, contrary to the historical facts as I understand them. And I know I'm not making you happy with this answer, but it is what I genuinely believe to be true.

And let me give you one more example of that. I am addressing it head on. (Laughter) You know, and I'll give you one more example. I can give an institutional explanation for why Donald Trump is President of the United States, and that is we abolished the presidential selection system that provided for peer review. That's the system that we had prior to 1968. We wiped it away in the name of democracy. Has the quality of our nominees improved since then? Could Donald Trump have been elected by the leaders of the Republican Party in a smoke-filled room, except these days you couldn't smoke in it? No, absolutely not.

So that's less democracy in the name of better outcomes, and I'm all for it.

MS. KAMARCK: Okay, let's go to this side of the room. The gentleman right here in the middle. And I would like that side of the panel to take the questions.

MR. ZIBLATT: We're just talking to each other down here.

SPEAKER: I'm wondering what effect you think the fact that only 50 percent or less of our electorate actually votes. How does that impact democracy as we know it? And if it's a big problem, what can we do about it?

MR. LEVITSKY: I'll take that on. So by virtually any definition a democracy in which, in some cases, a majority of the adult population doesn't vote is less democratic than what we aspire to. For a long time many political scientists didn't worry very much about low turnout in the United States, in part because they looked at surveys that suggested that those who didn't vote had more or less the same preferences as those who vote. That is less the case today and a lot of us are worried in different ways about extreme partisan

polarization.

And there's some pretty good evidence, and this has increased over time, that those who are voting, both in primaries in particular, but in general elections and primaries, are those who have the -- are most committed partisans and have the most extreme views. Those who don't vote by and large are people who care less about what's going on in politics. But democracy, it turns out, really needs those folks, too. And it not only would be I think normatively better to have those folks voting, but there's at least some evidence that if they were voting systematically, we would have less polarizing electoral outcomes, both in primaries and in general elections.

I tend to have pretty libertarian instincts in most respects, but I'm actually strongly in favor of mandatory voting. I think it's a duty for citizens.

MS. KAMARCK: Okay. Let's take another question over here. How about on the aisle there? The gentleman on the aisle and then we'll go to the lady and then we'll -- okay, go ahead.

MR. SKINNER: Hi, I'm Richard Skinner from Johns Hopkins. I have quick quip and then a question.

The quip is that two of the greatest decades of economic growth in the 20th century were the 1920s and the 1960s. The 1920s gave us immigration restriction, the 1960s gave us great progress in civil rights, but also a pretty ferocious backlash. So the obvious case that economic growth always makes cultural change easy doesn't quite hold up in my view.

Over the past several decades we've seen the Republican Party constantly attack the mass media, attack it as liberal, as out of touch, as elitist. You also have a whole industry that has now gained a great amount of power in the room within the Republican Party of the self-consciously conservative media, which lives off of that charge, that you can't trust the mainstream media, that they lie to you, that they're all New York liberals, and so on.

To what extent does Trump's current attacks on the media, while some of

them clearly motivated by his own imbroglios, to what extent does it draw off that history going back to Nixon and Goldwater and others who attacked the mainstream media?

MS. KAMARCK: Who would like that?

MR. ZIBLATT: Okay, I'll say one thing, yeah. So I think that there is a tendency -- I mean, I view this as an alternative argument to these arguments about cultural and economic change, that in many ways if you actually look at where voters for the far right in Europe, so the AFD, come from, they come from -- this answers your question -- from the CDU. They come disproportionately from the center right. If you look who voted for UKIP or support UKIP, they come disproportionately from the Conservative Party.

I think when you look at voters, in many ways that kind of rise of populism is a function of strategies of the center right across the advanced democracies. And in particular, as politicians in center right parties make certain issues salient through immigration, nationalism, and then don't deliver on these, then they leave in their wake a series of -- disaffected voters who want to find more extreme candidates to represent them.

So I think in many ways Trump was a Republican creation. He is in a long line of Republicans pushing further and further to the right and how have not delivered on their promises. And so I think this is in many ways kind of what we're witnessing.

So in terms of his -- so I think that's the kind of general point. I think maybe E.J. has some thoughts on this, as well.

MR. DIONNE: Yeah. I just want to salute you on both ends. You're completely right, there is no automatic tie between good times and toleration, although I still would claim that a lot of the good things that happened in the '60s, including, by the way, a loosening of a very substantial opening of immigration was linked to prosperity, but I buy your claim that we can't speak of this as something automatic.

You're dead right on the media and Trump is in some ways the product of a very long history of conservative criticism of the media that began after the Goldwater election, Spiro Agnew attacking "nattering nabobs of negativism," a wonderful line always.

(Laughter) And that led in turn to the creation of new media institutions.

First, conservative talk radio in the 1980s, which is extremely important, I think, in a movement toward the right and a hardening of the right. Roger Ailes tried to turn Rush Limbaugh into a TV show. As somebody myself who was born with a face made for radio, I understand that was sort of -- that didn't work. (Laughter) That worked only so-so. But instead of going smaller, he went bigger and started Fox News.

And now you have the openings online that are in many ways to the right of Fox News. And I think this created a media environment that facilitated Trump's rise. We could talk all afternoon about this, but I think you're right to point to the importance of this long-term development on the conservative end of politics.

MS. KAMARCK: Okay. The lady with the yellow sweater. And here's what I'm going to do now because we're almost out of time. I'd like to have you speak, the gentleman behind her, and then the gentleman on the row back there. So let's get three questions up at once and then, panelists, decide which one you'd like to respond to because we've only got about 10 more minutes.

Go ahead. And say your name so --

MS. GRENADIER: I'm Janice Wolk Grenadier. I was illegally jailed and tortured in the city of Alexandria. I was held in solitary confinement for 14 days. I was sentenced for 30 days for $8,100 in legal fees that were illegally gotten. I'm the ex-wife of the son of a judge. I was, like I said, held in solitary confinement for 14 days. I carry my crucifix and my comb from jail.

Justice we pay a high price for. In Nazi Germany they slowly took away one right after another. I had to sneak documents out and I got out early. A woman in China was jailed at the same time I was. She's still in jail. So I was in jail for 22 days. She's still there for outing government corruption.

We as Americans voted for Donald Trump because he was a disrupter, because he was going to clean house, because he did Tweet we've got a broken judiciary.

We have a broken judiciary. We have a broken government. We have broken elected officials that we have nowhere as Main Street America to go to when something like this happens. I've had no justice and now I have a kangaroo court on May 22nd that a federal judge has done a show cause and he's using a lawyer outside the Department of Justice as a prosecuting attorney against me for a made-up charge.

MS. KAMARCK: Okay, Janice, is there a question?

MS. GRENADIER: My question to you all is do you see this not turning into Nazi Germany for the American people? And that's why we made this change.

MS. KAMARCK: Good, thank you. Let's got to the gentleman right behind you, get that. And sir, say your name.

MR. GRINDSTAFF: Hugh Grindstaff.

MS. KAMARCK: Okay, go ahead, Hugh.

MR. GRINDSTAFF: If the Fairness Doctrine had been applied to this election, recent election, how would that have changed it?

MS. KAMARCK: Okay. And then there was a gentleman on the aisle there, right there. Yeah, let's get that final question.

MR. SIEGEL: Thank you. My name is Michael Siegel. And my question is, is part of the infection the loss of political courage?

MS. KAMARCK: Okay, good. All right. So who would like to respond either to Janice, to Hugh, or to Michael? And we don't have a lot of time. Okay, so let's start down there. Okay, go ahead.

MR. LEVITSKY: So I want to start by saying I don't think we're sliding into Nazi Germany. I think we need to look at the world carefully, concretely, and not exaggerate.

On courage, there is a -- we're in a period in which we are -- our democratic norms are weakening as we sort of escalate in a tit-for-tat process of using institutions as weapons against our opponents. It may be the most, in my view, the most outrageous case in recent years, although there are many on both sides of the aisle, was the Senate's

decision not to allow President Obama to fill a Supreme Court vacancy that opened up on 2016. But there's more this story.

There's now talk in -- and this is what I'm talking about in an escalating tit-for-tat, there's talk in Democratic circles of if the Democrats win the Senate this year, which may or may not happen, but if it happens that should Democrats, should another Supreme Court arise, play tit-for-tat. Should they deny Donald Trump the ability to reshape the Supreme Court for a generation? That is a dangerous process of escalating norm erosion that in the cases of democratic breakdown and democratic crisis that I have studied across the world rarely ends well.

Where does courage come in? Political leaders have to have the courage to tell their bases we know you're angry, we know you hate what the Republicans did, we know that in every sense justice cries out that you should respond the same way, and yet we can't do it. For the sake of our institutions we are not going to respond to that behavior. That requires political courage.

I don't think there is somehow -- that human beings are weaker today than they were in some period. I think we need to better understand, and this actually gets to Bill's point, that in some sense we've become too democratic. Politicians really fear the base. I think it partly has to do with the rapidly changing media technologies, the power of the Internet which is not fully understood always by politicians. Politicians fear the base today more than they did in the past. And that is leading them to not take the leadership positions -- not take the positions of political courage that sometimes is needed to defend our institutions.

MR. GALSTON: Finally I get to disagree with one of my colleagues. But first I'd say with respect to the first question, it's a really odd formulation of things. And I think of ICE enforcement and the general sense is that it's intensified among people who are not felons since Donald Trump's election and, therefore, the idea that the election was a way of responding to inappropriate action seems odd to me.

But loss of political courage, I want to say sort of two things about it. One, let's take your example of Democrats winning control of the Senate. They would have the House, as well. It would be entirely appropriate for there to be a negotiation that is advice and consent, as is the role of the Senate. It's not to simply confirm whomever. I think if people are talking in those retaliatory terms it doesn't make sense.

But I think it's perfectly reasonable, it would be, for a Democratic Senate, if there's a vacancy, to say to Trump, you know, we can stop this. In fact, Obama did just that by nominating Merrick Garland, who a year or two earlier had unanimous support among Democrats and Republicans. So that's the kind of Supreme Court choice Trump ought to make.

In general, some of my colleagues worry that the Democrats are in danger of moving to the left and being obstructionists. They believe in government, you know. They like cutting a deal and passing laws and engaging in negotiations and compromising, and so do most of the people who vote for them. There's a striking difference in the acceptance of compromise among people who are Democrats and Republicans.

So I think the dangers of the resistance going too far or of other parts of this extraordinary mobilization in response to Trump are overplayed. If you really look at what's happening in the nomination of candidates, you'll find parties are involved. It's very pragmatic. The ideologues are not running away with it. And there's an appropriate role to play. Advice and consent go together. And in most cases, we've had negotiations with the majority party in the Senate, whatever the party of the presidency is.

MS. KAMARCK: Gretchen, I'm going to let you close this out. Thank you very much to the audience. Gretchen?

MS. HELMKE: Great. I just want to thank everyone so much for participating in such an interesting discussion. For those of you who haven't had a chance to read these books, I think we just scratched the surface of so many ongoing debates about sort of the role of informal versus formal institutions and how that's contributing to the

process.

And I also think something that some of the questions touched on with respect to political courage, I guess I would reframe that in terms of incentives. What are the incentives that politicians in our system have to put country over party? And I think the books offer some very interesting reflections on that really fundamental question.

And finally, I just want to highlight that some of the questions about citizens' values and culture, some of the questions about foreign influence, those are precisely the questions that we're fielding with the Bright Line Watch surveys, and there are some really interesting answers that we have both from experts and then across the public that I think might add to this discussion, as well.

So thank you all very much. (Applause)

MS. KAMARCK: And I want to thank Bright Line Watch for co-sponsoring this. Thank you. (Applause)

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