THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION PODCAST
BROOKINGS CAFETERIA PODCAST
Best of the Brookings Cafeteria podcast in 2018
Wednesday, December 27, 2018

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DEWS: Welcome to the Brookings Cafeteria, the podcast about ideas and the experts who have them. I'm Fred Dews.

As 2018 ends, I look back with gratitude on another great year for the Brookings Cafeteria. This is the 59th episode of the year. We've hosted over 60 guests and covered dozens of policy topics.

To observe the closing of the year, today's show features a collection of my favorite clips from the past 12 months. I hope you enjoy it and take the opportunity to download full episodes that interest you and also share the show with friends.

In January, our annual look ahead to the top economic issues of the year, Ted Gayer, then the vice president and director of Economic Studies addressed a range of issues, including how to read the unemployment figures, labor force participation, new research on deaths of despair, and economic growth.

If you could implement any one policy idea for the economy for this year in looking ahead, what would that be?

GAYER: I think I'd just refer to some that might be on the list. I'm going to guess that last year I told you we should have a carbon tax where we use -- a revenue neutral carbon tax and that's always been something that I think would be smart policy. I think among the economic community you have broad agreement there. You might have disagreement about how you use that revenue, whether or not to offset corporate taxes, which is probably what I argued last year, or whether or not to use it for spending or through other tax reductions that are more progressive. One, I'm for that last year, and two, we just went through a huge debate about federal taxes and you didn't hear nary a word about carbon taxes. So that tells you how popular of an idea that is.

I don't know if this counts as one policy. I will go back to what I said before, which is where I think we are underexploring some problems, and that is on the local regulatory level. I think if you look at what I see as productivity weakness,

it is linked to the fact that people aren't as mobile as they used to be. You don't get as much people moving across states as you used to. And so in a very simplistic world you're in a local economy that takes some sort of a shock that leads to a depression, local depression or local weakness in the economy. You look for productive employment somewhere else. You relocate. That becomes a lot harder when the relocation decision is really uneconomic for you. That the rents in the new city are just way too high, but I think largely driving those high rents is what I was talking about the neighborhood near me. People don't want mixed-use housing. People don't want to increase the supply of homes. There are all sorts of local regulations that inhibit the ability to increase the supply of homes, so those prices are artificially high.

So I think more attention to that, if I had to kind of bring up my dream policy, that would certainly fall under that umbrella.

The caveat there is these are local policies. This is not the federal government, and having coordination across states and things like occupational licensing or zoning or you name it is challenging, but I think it would go a long way.

DEWS: Ted is now the executive vice president of Brookings. I want to thank him for kicking off each of the last three years at Brookings Cafeteria with a look ahead to the important economic issues of the year. You can also download an interview I did with Ted in June about the role Brookings plays in today's policy debates. For the top economic issues of 2019, I look forward to talking with Economic Studies senior fellow David Wessel and sharing that with you in early January.

In one of the eight interviews with authors of books published by our own Brookings Institution Press, Bill Finan, director of the Press, talked with global economy and development scholar, Madiha Afzal, about her book, "Pakistan under Siege: Extremism, Society, and the State."

In the book, Afzal explains Pakistanis' own views on terrorist groups,

jihad, and America, the relationship between Islam and the Pakistani state and how the country could redefine its sense of nationalism without what she called the "crutch of religion."

DEWS: Your book breaks new ground by discussing how Islam is inculcated into students through their education but it is a Pakistani state-mediated ideology of Islam you argue, one tinged with conspiracy. Can you describe these textbooks a bit?

AFZAL: Yeah, absolutely. So these textbooks as they exist today, and I really focus on textbooks of Pakistan studies, which is sort of Pakistan's history. In 1979, General Zia, who was a military dictator, who was not only the person who engaged in changing Pakistan's legal system and making it hardline but also changed Pakistan's curricula under his rule, the Education department put out sort of a document which says that the goal of these textbooks should be to aid Pakistan in becoming a completely Islamized state. So that was the explicit goal of the textbooks is to actually make the country completely Islamized. The textbooks heavily mention Islam. They literally start out by saying that the ideology of Pakistan is Islam. That Pakistan is defined in terms of religion. They glorify the concept of jihad and its armed connotation. So say that armed warfare is glorified against whoever is considered the other. It could be India. It could be other religious groups. And they really paint Pakistan as a victim, not only of India, not only of the British colonizers, but also of the West.

And so I'll read a couple of quotes that might crystallize some of this almost propaganda that is in these books.

So one is, "The armed forces of Pakistan filled with the spirit of jihad," so jihad is something that the armed forces are engaging in, "forced an enemy many times bigger than it to face a humiliated defeat."

So there are many things happening here. The enemy many times bigger is India. The army is engaging in jihad they're saying against India. And then

they're saying they defeated India, when in fact, they did not. So there's actually a lie, you know, or a falsehood in this line. India is always painted as evil. The word "evil" is used and "the enemy" is used many times. In other sentences, "India has a constant wish to weaken the integrity of Pakistan" for one reason or the other. So the idea that India was engaging in a conspiracy against Pakistan. There is another line, "The process of separation of East Pakistan was secretly supported by America." So the idea that the West and India are engaging in conspiracies against Pakistan, we can actually see it play out in many of these attitudes that Pakistanis have on terrorist group in which they are saying that it's actually America and India who are engaging in terrorism against Pakistan or are supporting terrorist groups against Pakistan. The sense of conspiracy against the country is sort of a deep-rooted sense, and all the country's problems are in some sense blamed on these two powers.

DEWS: You point out, also, that not all textbooks are like these.

AFZAL: Sure.

DEWS: There are the Cambridge O-level textbooks which most secular citizens or those who approach the university level read which provide a much more objective accounting of what happens.

There's some discussion of educational reforms which could lead to change.

AFZAL: Let me preface this by saying the mentions of India as the enemy and the words "evil" and "jihad" have been reduced in the textbooks quite a bit in the last few years. So there has been one reform. While it hasn't really changed the structure of the textbooks, it has reduced the amount of negativity in them quite a bit.

(Music plays)

DEWS: You can learn more about "Pakistan under Siege" on our website or wherever you like to find books.

Millennials, those Americans born between 1981 and 1997, represent not only the country's largest generation but at 44 percent minority are also part of the most diverse adult generation in American history. Up next, Bill Frey, demographer and senior fellow in the Metropolitan Policy Program discusses his research on this generation, which he calls a social, economic, and political bridge to younger and even more racially diverse generations to come.

FREY: So as we progress going forward, this millennial generation is really going to be the generation because of its racial diversity to sort of break the mold and just plow ahead and make people understand why diversity is so important in this country. And their achievements, their examples as role models for the generations that follow, their ability to overcome racial disparities and hurdles that have been thrown up against racial minorities over the years. I mean, we seen it in politics, we see it in all kinds of ways, to the extent they're going to be able to do that, they're going to forego the way for the generations that follow them. And that's why I think they're so important as the first, you know, very minority adult generation. They have a big role to play, and I think they're up to it. So, you know, that's the good news.

DEWS: I asked Bill to explain why the millennial generation is so diverse.

FREY: Part of the reason why the millennial generation is so racially diverse has to do with past immigration to the United States. And I emphasize "past immigration," not necessarily current immigration. That is during the '80s, '90s, and early 2000s we had higher numbers of people coming to the U.S. from Latin America, from Asia. The consequence of changes in the immigration law really in the mid-'60s, but it didn't really start having an impact till the '80s and '90s. And of course, those people usually come to the U.S. as young adults and their children help to build up that youthful population. At the same time, the white population is getting older and continues to get older. And we actually in the

last 10 years have had an absolute decline of whites under age 18 and a modest change in whites during the millennial population. So the growth of this millennial population from babies on has a lot to do with first and second generation Americans.

Now, I have an asterisk there and the asterisk is people are thinking, well, immigration is the cause of diversity in the United States. Well, past immigration has been but, in fact, today, most of the growth in the Hispanic population are from birth to people that are already here, not so much immigration any more.

DEWS: You can learn more about his research in his book, "Diversity Explosion: How New Racial Demographics are Remaking America."

Over the past few years, state and federal policy toward recreational and medical marijuana has been influx. I spoke with senior fellow in Governance Studies, John Hudak, about what policy changes need to happen at the federal level to keep pace with the states and with public opinion.

HUDAK: There are a lot of policy changes that need to happen in order for federal policy to keep pace with state policy and for federal policy to reflect public opinion. Right now, more than 60 percent of Americans support legal regulated recreational marijuana reform at the federal level. About 70 percent of Americans believe that the federal government should not stand in the way of states that choose to reform their recreational marijuana laws, and about 90 percent of Americans support medical marijuana.

What the federal government needs to do if it's truly willing to deal with this situation and take this on as a serious policy, and frankly, if the federal government wants to do what the president of the United States stated on the campaign trail that he was committed to, and that was a legalization of medical marijuana and a respect for state recreational marijuana laws would be to allow for a relaxation of federal restrictions in states that have chosen to reform their laws.

The federal government doesn't need to legalize cannabis nationwide. Or at least it doesn't need to legalize cannabis nationwide to deal with some of the problems that exist in states. What it can say is, listen, we have tax restrictions, we have banking restrictions, we have intrastate commerce restrictions that exist. Those can be relaxed if a state chooses to reform its laws. If a state chooses not to reform its laws, then it can exist in the same legal environment that we have now. But I think it's challenging for a business in California not to be able to write off most of the types of deductions that a standard business would be entitled to simply because it is growing or selling cannabis under the state regulatory model.

In addition to that, many companies are unable to get access to banking, even for simple checking or savings accounts, and the basis for that is anti-money laundering laws. But what that does is it creates a cash-only business which only makes money laundering that much easier. If you are a medical patient in Las Vegas and you decide to take a vacation to Los Angeles, even though those are two states with medical and recreational marijuana programs, you cannot bring product with you from Las Vegas to Los Angeles. You would be crossing a state border. That's a silly premise. You should be able to bring medicine with you if you are a registered, legal medical marijuana patient.

And so there are ways to what people like Mark Kleiman and others have argued are guardrails. That is, you set up these regulatory boundaries that exist where the federal government steps in and says, here is what we are comfortable with from a regulatory perspective, and you essentially have an opt-in system. States are not required to do these things. They are not required to legalize marijuana for medical or recreational purposes, but if they choose to do that they then get access to certain federal benefits.

(Music plays)

DEWS: John is author of the Brookings Press title, "Marijuana: A Short History." And was also a co-producer of the Brookings short film, "The Life

She Deserves: Medical Marijuana in the United States."

In April, Dany Bahar, a David M. Rubenstein fellow in the Global Economy and Development Program, visited the Colombian city of Cucuta on the border with Venezuela. There, he observed firsthand the unfolding refugee crisis as thousands of Venezuelans crossed the border to seek food, shelter, medicine, and new lives away from the difficult situation in their country. He said it was a terrifying and not normal border.

But I asked him to reflect on what, if anything, he saw that gave him hope for the future.

BAHAR: Fred, I saw, as I told you before, very sad things. I saw people looking for food. People don't know where they're going to sleep. People trying to do whatever is possible to find medicine for their family or for their children. And at the same time I saw a lot of hope in attitude. And I saw a lot of people who are entrepreneurs, who are doing their best to keep up with their microbusinesses. I saw people who were selling fruits. I saw people who had their own little business of phone accessories and they told me, you know, every day I take a little bit of my earnings and put them back in the business and my business is growing. I saw people who were, as you said, like creating art like wallets and selling them in the streets. I saw people who already had three restaurants in Cucuta giving jobs to natives and to refugees. So I saw a lot of hope in that because I think that these people, I mean, if there is something good that is going to come out of all this tragedy it's that it's actually these migrants and these refugees will play a huge role in reconstructing Venezuela. Because as I've shown in my academic research, migrants are the most important or the most effective way of transferring technologies and knowledge across countries, and these people will spend some years abroad in their jobs, in new industries, and they will take a little bit of learning back to Venezuela which will, hopefully, will help Venezuela become a diversified economy having a strong business sector and having a prosperous

quality of life for everybody. So I think that they are actually the key to the future.

DEWS: You can find a slideshow of Dany's border trip and a blogpost he wrote on Brookings.edu.

Research from Brookings and elsewhere demonstrates that the combination of childhood poverty, segregation, and race is particularly hard on African American and Native American boys who as men are killed disproportionately by police. Senior fellow, Camille Busette, director of the Race, Prosperity, and Inclusion Initiative at Brookings wrote that "It is clear that the level of exclusion faced by these men is staggering. No other demographic group has fared as badly, so persistently, and for so long."

In my interview with her she explained why this is a national crisis.

BUSETTE: So the national crisis is the fact that African American boys, poor African American boys and poor Native American boys simply do not have a chance to participate in this economy. And that has been a longstanding crisis, so I don't want to pretend that the crisis is something that just popped up with Adam Looney's paper. But it's a longstanding crisis. But when you have a significant portion of your population completely locked out of any opportunity, then that is a crisis.

DEWS: You write in the piece that the level of exclusion faced by these men, African American and Native American, is staggering. And I was just struck by your use of the word "exclusion" in this piece because inclusion is such an important part of your research and your project. Can you expand on that idea of exclusion?

BUSETTE: Yeah, absolutely.

So when I think about inclusion and exclusion, I think about social systems primarily. And how is it that we are able to interface with others and how is it that we're able to take advantage of the various social and, you know, economic institutions in our country? So from my perspective, when I talk about

the exclusion of poor African American boys and Native American boys, I'm talking about the complete inability of those boys to be able to take advantage of or access any of the opportunities that this country affords people of all sorts. And the exclusion piece is really both historical and it's contemporary. That exclusion occurs because of our history and legacy around excluding African Americans in every sphere of economic life. It also includes the long history of putting Native Americans, first confiscating their lands and then putting them on tribal lands, and then increasingly starving those areas of resources. So exclusion there.

It also means a very poor experience around education. So in the cases of poor African American boys and poor Native American boys, when you look at the kind of educations that they receive it's usually subpar. And so, again, they're excluded from really the best or even the most modest opportunities educationally. And those things compound over time to make it very difficult for them to be included in vibrant employment markets.

So that is why I have labeled that exclusion, and a lot of my work, at least for the first five years of this initiative, will really be focused on how we break that history and how we create new patterns of inclusion.

DEWS: I asked her what she meant by new New Deal for African American and Native American boys.

BUSETTE: I think I've finally come to the perspective that there is a special and particularly onerous position that poor African American and poor Native American boys are in. And it is determined largely by the history that we just talked about. And almost no other group experiences that. In addition to that, particularly for African American boys but I believe it's also true for Native Americans, they also combat a really negative perception and that perception has been developed over hundreds of years. African Americans as being very violent and brutal, et cetera. And so my feeling is that that kind of unique profile in the United States really requires a unique set of solutions that is targeted to them

because of these histories. And so what I mean by New Deal is something that is very, very comprehensive, that starts when these young men are babies, because there have been studies that have shown that even young, pre-K kids, when they're in pre-K, particularly African American boys, have been treated already like they are on the route to the judicial system. So there's a difference in the treatment they receive when being disciplined compared to their white counterparts. And that starts early. You know, pre-K is like three, four, two, even. So we need to have a set of programs that really start supporting them and recognizing their need for affirmation and validation very early on, and then we also need to have within the school system a very different approach to how we support them and educate them. And so we need to have I think a combination of wraparound services which really help them support them from an economic perspective, but we also need to start thinking about what it means to have equity in education and what we would need to do in order to correct the education environment within which they find themselves and really bring them to a point where they can take advantage of other opportunities.

And then we need to have a range of programs that allow them to create social networks with communities and other people who are thriving. And so I think you need all of that to be able to rectify this problem. So it's not cheap.

(Music plays)

DEWS: Many Americans are worried about increasing automation in all facets of daily life, especially in employment. Bill Finan interviewed vice president and director of Governance Studies, Darrell West, about his recent book, The Future of Work: Robots, AI, and Automation. In this clip, Bill asks Darrell to discuss how fears about robots taking jobs may have steered some voters to choose Donald Trump over Hillary Clinton in 2016.

WEST: You know, whenever people are nervous economically, either for themselves or for their friends and family members and children, there are

political consequences. And so I think it's no accident that we got Donald Trump in this particular era. I mean, he pointed to the disruptions based on lost manufacturing jobs and bad trade deals, but the economic changes are actually much broader than that. He actually underestimates the disruption that's taking place because it's really going to cut across every sector. It's not just a manufacturing or a trade issue. So what we need to guard against is that we don't end up in a situation where the economic anxiety produces what I like to call "Trumpism on steroids," meaning Trump is actually not an abjuration but the anxiety produces a lot of discontent, mistrust of major political institutions, and you have a series of populous politicians who come around to take advantage of that.

And a big part of the political problem right now is the geographic inequities. Because we basically have a situation where there's a lot of economic prosperity on the East Coast and on the West Coast but not too much in between. Our political system is based on geographic representation. We may end up in a situation where the prosperous areas have 30 senators and the not very prosperous areas have 70 senators, and that is like a complete disaster for America. Like, that guarantees that every election going forward is going to have some version of a populous leader. It could be a right-wing populist like Trump, or it could be a left wing populous that would be equally upsetting to people in the Midwest who, you know, are not inclined to support that type of philosophy.

So when you think about the reforms that would make a difference here, I argue we need to move towards universal voting. It's what the Australians do. They basically say you have to vote and it's a $25 fine if you don't vote. So you know, it's just a very small penalty, but based on that they have 90 to 95 percent turnout. If we want to get a handle on political polarization, we need to increase the turnout. Because when you have low turnout elections, it encourages both Democrats and Republicans to play to their base, and that's how we get extremism, intolerance, and polarization.

I think we also need to get rid of the Electoral College because of those geographical inequities that I talked about. We've already had two recent elections where there was a difference in the outcome between the popular vote and the Electoral College. With the inequities based on prosperity between the Coasts and the Midwest, that may actually become the norm where every election produces a different winner in the Electoral College versus the popular vote. That will be a constitutional crisis if that happens all the time as opposed to sporadically which has been the case in the past. So I think we need to really rethink some of these basic governance questions, kind of recognizing that the accelerating technology is going to produce economic disruption. There's going to be anxiety. But if we don't have a system that can still make positive and constructive changes going forward then our governance is going to produce very bad outcomes.

DEWS: In the lead up to the 2018 midterm elections, I did a series of special episodes devoted to issues related to the elections. In one, I interviewed senior fellow, Isabel Sawhill. She wrote an essay on our site titled "What the forgotten Americans really want and how to give it to them," which relates closely to her new book, The Forgotten Americans: An Economic Agenda for a Divided Nation.

I asked Belle, given that in the 2016 Presidential Campaign, candidate Hillary Clinton had detailed policy proposals that addressed a wide range of economic issues that the working class and the middle class cared about. So why did they, the white working class, especially, favor Donald Tramp in the election when it seemed that from just public policy standpoints, they should have favored Hillary Clinton and her ideas?

SAWHILL: Let me start by answering it in the following way: I think that most people are very busy. They are trying to earn a living. They are trying to take care of their families. They don't follow politics and public policy questions the way we at Brookings do. So they need simple messages. And they weren't getting

simple messages from the Democratic Party. They were getting simple messages from Donald Trump. He was saying I'm going to fix the problems you're facing. I'm going to build a wall on the border. I'm going to restrict trade and I'm going to bring back manufacturing, and I'm going to do all of these things to bring back your jobs. And they got that. And they thought all of that was true. I mean, in my book I actually say there were a lot of misleading and flawed proposals in the Trump agenda. But that's another question. It did resonate with the public.

But I think the other lesson that comes out of this is that you have to be simple, and you have to articulate values and principles, not just laundry lists of policies. And one of the ways I am beginning to talk about it is to say we need to marry red state values about education, family, and especially work, with blue state policies that will help people to achieve their aspirations in each of those areas, but especially in the area of work. And if people understand what the value is, what the principle is, and then that you have an agenda to help them achieve it, they don't care as much about the details as they do about what your values are.

And so I go back to what I said at the beginning which is the value of work, the work ethic is a very unifying value in American society.

DEWS: You can find links to Belle's essay and her new book in the show notes of the episode on Forgotten Americans and the 2018 Midterm Elections.

David Wessel, in one of his regular Wessel's Economic Update segments, commented on the Tenth Anniversary of the Financial Crash, including the collapse of Lehman Brothers and the response of key members of the U.S. Government to it, some of whom are working at Brookings today.

WESSEL: Ten years is not enough time for the final verdict of history. Heck, economists and historians spent more than half a century arguing about the Great Depression. But 10 years does provide us with some perspective. Here's mine.

One, what happened in 2007 through 2009, the housing bust, the financial panic, was economically catastrophic, and much of it was preventable. Sure, banking crises and panics occur throughout history, but this episode was a failure of almost every check on excesses, irresponsibility, and fraud. Regulators, legislators, boards of directors, chief executives, accountants, rating agencies, lawyers, the financial press all failed. We let the financial system outgrow the regulatory apparatus. We borrowed too much and we didn't appreciate just how vulnerable the financial system was to a disturbance like the bursting of a housing bubble.

When we weigh the costs and benefits of financial regulation today, and there are costs, we should remember that the cost of too little oversight and too loose regulation can be enormous.

Two, the government, the Congress, the President, the Treasury, the Federal Reserve were slow, too slow to react. Even after the housing bubble burst around 2007, they didn't appreciate how bad things would get. Now, making decisions in real time is difficult. The decision makers didn't know then what we know now. Nevertheless, some folks worried about pumping too much water onto the fire too soon. They worried that cutting interest rates too much would spur inflation or provoke a crash in the U.S. dollar, or that helping too many people would lead others to take unwise risks. They were wrong. We would have been better off had the most potent government responses in housing, monetary policy, fiscal policy, regulatory interventions had been taken sooner and with more force.

Three, for all the missteps, the changes in direction and the political backlash, we did not suffer a repeat of the Great Depression and we could have. Ben Bernanke, the former chairman of the Federal Reserve and now my colleague here at the Hutchins Center, says that the 2008 financial panic was actually worse than the one in 1929. This time, every major financial institution was shaking. Now, no one ever gets applause for saying it could have been worse if not for me,

but the fact is it would have been worse if not for the efforts of people like Bernanke, Hank Paulson, Tim Geithner, and their colleagues.

Four, the public knew that times were bad but never understood what the government was doing and why. Some of this was inevitable. Rescuing financial institutions was crucial but never going to be popular. Some of this reflects the tough decisions that had to be made about how best to deploy limited resources, how much for homeowners, how much for auto companies, how much for banks. Some of this reflects the anger that so few people were held responsible for this economic calamity. A lot of us really do want Old Testament justice. And some of this skepticism stems from the klutzy communications from the principals who never managed to explain clearly what they were doing. Whatever the cause, the crisis left a legacy of public distrust, not only of Wall Street but also of Washington, and that has lasted a whole lot longer than the Great Recession.

And five, a lot has been done to make the financial system more resilient to reduce the risk of a financial crisis as bad as the one we suffered 10 years ago. The banks are better capitalized. Regulation has been tightened. But the job is not finished and the pressure now is to weaken, not to complete post-crisis showing up with financial regulation.

As the managing director of the International Monetary Fund, Christine Lagarde put it the other day, the system is safer but not safe enough.

DEWS: In another interview led by Brookings Institution Press director Bill Finan, nonresident senior fellow Marvin Kalb reflected on the life and legacy of legendary journalist, Edward R. Murrow and the relevance of his brand of journalism today.

KALB: One of the things to bear in mind about Edward R. Murrow is where he comes from. Murrow is from a small town, log cabin in North Carolina, raised in the state of Washington, came back to North Carolina. Threw his life into the idea of education and then journalism. All of this started in the 1930s in

Europe. Murrow saw the rise of Adolf Hitler. It had a profound impact upon him. He always worried about the rise from the Reich of a force of a personality who had come to dominate the political scene and would do terrible things to freedom, terrible things to our sense of who we were. And when he saw the rise of McCarthy starting in 1950, it immediately arose in him fears that he was watching once again what was happening in Europe, in Germany in the mid-1930s and he was determined to stop it if he could.

How does a journalist stop it? The only thing a journalist can do is to cover the news accurately. And what Murrow decided to do using his radio program and then his weekly television program was to focus a lot of attention on what McCarthy was saying, how he said it, the impact of what he said upon the American people, and then finally, when he though the time was right, on March 9, 1954, he came in with this extraordinary broadcast on Murrow. And that was the beginning of the end of Senator McCarthy.

And one of the things to bear in mind, before that broadcast was aired 46 or 48 percent of the American people believed that McCarthy was the second most powerful man in America behind President Eisenhower. After the Murrow broadcast that number fell down to 32, and that is where it stayed throughout the Army MacArthur hearings for the next three months. That gave the Republicans up on the hill who were terrified at that time to move, they feared McCarthy, suddenly they realized that here was a journalist who could affect the opinions of the Americans about this man and they felt a little bit of courage to stand up. And Murrow did that. That was a phenomenal moment in the history of American journalism, the history of American politics. It says so much about what good journalism can do in a troubled political environment.

(Music plays)

DEWS: The conversation was about Marvin's recent book, <u>Enemy of the People: Trump's War on the Press, the New McCarthyism, and the Threat to</u>

American Democracy.

In another 2018 midterm election special episode, I asked Amy Liu, vice president and director of the Metropolitan Policy Program, to talk about issues in gubernatorial and local races. Although the contents are long over, a number of very important maters remain. One of them is state preemption of local decision-making. I asked Amy what it means and how

LIU: So let me explain what state preemption is first. Essentially, state preemption is when states impose limits or rules for local action including saying that state law overrides local ones. Now, I want to say that there are times when statewide standards make sense. You know, civil rights protections of works by race, gender, sexual orientation, for instance, those should be state standards. And a minimum wage that is family sustaining is also better statewide rather than having a city or a suburb issuing different minimum wage rates which can distort, you know, business location decisions.

However, the issue is if states fail to create standards that meet the needs of local residents, such as if employers discriminate or refuse to provide job benefits, or if wages are too low for families to make ends meet, or if the civil rights of immigrants are being violated, then cities are motivated to step up and act and make things better. And what we have right now is 28 states that preempt local governments from raising the minimum wage. We have 23 states that preempt them from requiring employers to provide base paid sick or family leave. And then we have a number of states that ban sanctuary cities. And then on top of that there are 42 states that impose tax or expenditure limitations at a time when cities and their partners are trying to step up and respond to a whole host of policy challenges in this environment whether it's about jobs or skills, affordable housing, racial segregation. So we do best when local leaders can innovate. And they're having, in fact, I heard today someone say that the counties and local jurisdictions are feeling a lack of incentive now to creatively solve these really hard problems

because of the state preemption.

And I have to say that while state and local tensions have always existed, I do think things have gotten worse. Maybe part of it is because of the intensifying partisanship at the national level. Perhaps because of unified GOP control in many states right now that tend to be anti-urban. You know, the funny thing is people ask me what's the flip side of that? What are positive examples? And interestingly, the two examples I can think of are in blue states, which you know, so one example we found is that New York State, for instance, has set a statewide minimum wage, but they also said if municipalities want to increase the minimum wage above their threshold they can. California also set a baseline for paid leave, requiring paid leave offered by employers. But they also said if local paid leave laws conflict, you know, businesses should follow the more generous criteria. So they're setting state standards but saying if localities want to improve upon it they can. And so I think that those are the kind of relationships and co-problem solving we need to see more of today.

DEWS: I was happy to let senior fellow E.J. Dionne take the microphone to interview Bob Kagan, senior fellow in Foreign Policy about Kagan's latest book, The Jungle Grows Back: America and our Imperiled World. Here, E.J. asks Bob to explain the argument of his book.

DIONNE: The book is called The Jungle Grows Back, and for a split second when I saw the title I thought, my God, has Bob Kagan become an environmentalist? What's he doing writing about jungles? So why don't you just start by giving listeners a sense of the argument of your book, which is pretty clear and straightforward. And by the way, the book is written in a very clear and straightforward way.

KAGAN: Well, thanks a lot. Yeah, I mean, the metaphor is for any folks out there, I'm not a good gardener and I haven't done much gardening, but I understand the general principle how gardens work.

DIONNE: I have a black thumb myself.

KAGAN: Anyone who has ever gardened knows that first of all, a garden is an artificial construct that human beings build. It's not a natural phenomenon. And once you've planted a garden your job is not finished. You have to weed it. You have to cut back the vines. You have to prevent the jungle from growing back over it because the forces of nature are always seeking to undermine and overgrow a garden.

And for me that's the metaphor for what we call, for lack of a better phrase, the "liberal world order" that was created largely the United States and American policies after World War II. We can think of all the horrible things that have happened over the past 70-75 years, and many horrible things have happened. But if you compare this period to the rest of human history, it's been a remarkable period. We've seen the most global prosperity that we've seen in any other time in history. Most people throughout history have been in abject poverty. And what we've seen since World War II is something like an average of four percent annual GDP growth globally and not just, obviously, in the West but in China, and India, and Latin America, and elsewhere.

In addition, of course, we've seen incredible explosion of democracy. Democracy is the rarest form of government. It's almost an accident in the rest of history and yet we've seen this has been a remarkably democratic world. And undergirding all this has been a long period, perhaps the longest that anyone can think of, of greater power peace. Now, there have been wars. Wars that the United States has been involved in, obviously. But the kind of cataclysmic world wars that we saw twice in the first half of the 20th Century have not been present.

So this in my view is like -- it's almost a miracle. It's a unique situation. It's an aberration in the same way that a garden is. And what we have to understand is this order, this generally positive international system doesn't just stay there. It requires constant efforts to beat back inherent forces in human

nature that seek to destroy it. So the international system is normally chaotic and conflictual, and human nature does not simply support democracy as I think you would agree.

DEWS: The Jungle Grows Back was published by Penguin Random House. Vanessa Williamson, a fellow in Governance Studies, coauthored a paper about black lives matter, showing that police-caused deaths predict protest activity. Listen to the full episode for a deep dive into the data and conclusion from the paper. But in this clip, Vanessa explains what she meant by describing the U.S. criminal justice system as one of racial control.

WILLIAMSON: So I think that sometimes we imagine that our criminal justice system is sort of this neutral and unchanging things. And there are just crimes and those are clearly delineated and those have always been that way and, you know, maybe at the margins there's a little bit of bias but basically, the criminal justice system is like a neutral actor in our society. But that's just not the case. And one way you can see that it's not the case is if you look at the times when the carceral state, that is to say the sort of laws governing criminality, the prison system, all those sorts of things, when have they really expanded? And they've expanded in direct reaction to the extension of political rights to African Americans. Right?

So you see the first great expansions of the criminal justice system in the years following the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment that outlawed slavery but made an exception for people who were convicted of a crime. Right? So you can't hold people and not pay them for their work except in the case of having been convicted of a crime. And what you see across the south, before even reconstruction started, and then much more at the end of reconstruction, you see laws put in place that sort of create classes of people to become criminals. Right?

So, for instance, you put a law in place outlawing vagrancy. Right? And what that means is that you're outlawing being poor. Right? You can just stop

people on the street and you ask them if they're employed. If they're not employed then you can call and say they were loitering. And then suddenly all of those people get channeled and disproportionately African American people, but also some poor white people get channeled into a system of prison labor. Right? And so that's the first great expansion of the U.S. criminal justice system.

And you see a similar expansion of the criminal justice system following the Civil Rights Act of the 1960s. So when we look at the development of the criminal justice system in the United States, you can't look at it from a colorblind lens because that's not how we got the system that we have today.

DEWS: I'll just go back to a point you made much earlier in other writing that the U.S. has the highest rate of incarceration of any industrialized country, or any country in the world.

WILLIAMSON: Yeah.

DEWS: It's very high whatever it is.

WILLIAMSON: And it's disproportionately high in certain communities. Right? It's really important that we connect those statistics that we've heard about incarceration, about stop and frisk, with what is that doing to people's political engagement? Right? When we built a system in this country that was intended very specifically to create conditions as like slavery as possible for newly freed black people. Right? And we created a criminal justice system to do that. When we respond to the Civil Rights era with mass incarceration, right, that's not just a legal act; it's a political act because it disenfranchises people. And I mean, the most obvious example, of course, is (inaudible) disenfranchisement. Right? But also, the lower level stops matter, too. Right?

So there is some great research done by some other political scientists, notably Vesla Weaver, looking at what happens when people just get stopped? They're not even arrested. Or they're arrested but they're not changed. And these low-level interactions with the state are basically the opposite of what

Social Security does. Right? Instead of providing resources and making people feel like, hey, I have a stake in this government. This government works for me, it provides the opposite message, like this government doesn't work for you. This government works for other people. You should probably take a big step back from interacting with the government that's supposed to represent you because when you do interact with them the consequences are really severe.

(Music plays)

MR. DEWS: Finally, today I did an interview with Rubenstein fellow Alina Polyakova from the Foreign Policy program at Brookings to explore questions around Russia's involvement in U.S. elections in the recent past and in the future.

So let's move away from the past and focus on the present and the future. You've called the kinds of disinformation campaigns that Russian ran against the 2016 elections "yesterday's game." So if that's yesterday's game, what's tomorrow's game?

MS. POLYAKOVA: That's right. And we're still trying to respond to yesterday's wars but we should be really thinking about what's going to come at us because despite what the Russians have been doing now for over a decade in Eastern Europe in terms of these kinds of influence operations -- cyberattacks, propaganda, disinformation -- we were completely taken by surprised in the United States in 2016. That's not the case anymore because of some of the awareness phrasing that I've been taking about. But clearly what's coming at us is that these kinds of information warfare tools are becoming much more advanced with the advent of emerging technologies, like artificial intelligence. I think by now many people are familiar with what deep fakes are, for example. That certainly wasn't the case about six months ago. Deep fakes are, of course, manipulated audio or video that is generated to look original. Meaning, you know, you can have President Obama saying whatever you want him to say. He'll sound like President Obama. He looks like President Obama. You can do this to any world leader.

DEWS: I've seen one of those, of Obama.

POLYAKOVA: Of course.

DEWS: It's very scary.

POLYAKOVA: Yes. You can't tell the difference between what's real and what's not. And these kinds of AI technologies can also generate images of people who don't actually exist, and the distribution technologies, meaning how quickly this kind of fake content can spread, are not really being dealt with by the social media companies who are being manipulated and used to spread this kind of content. I mean, so far we really haven't seen Facebook, Twitter, and Google and YouTube, which is owned by Google, do much more than quite superficial fixes one could say in terms of how they prioritize content or delete certain accounts and things like that, all welcome fixes but at the end of the day there is a much deeper ads-driven infrastructure that malicious actors, like Russia, have manipulated before and will continue to manipulate to produce content that's not only impossible to tell from real or fake but that also targets in a very personalized way individuals, in a customized way. So the same tools that, you know, Nike will use to sell sneakers to let's say young men between the ages of 17 and 19 who live in the suburbs of Michigan who hold certain political attitudes and who have maybe bought Adidas sneakers in the last year, these exact kind of micro targeting tools are used to create much more precise disinformation and propaganda. And I've been surprised that we haven't seen more of this because those tools are out there in open source. Russia doesn't have the innovative capabilities to create those tools but they're out there for them to use.

And so I think what we're going to see come at us, and again, I'm surprised we haven't seen this yet, is much more sophisticated forms of highly targeted, personalized, customized disinformation attacks beyond what we've seen the Russians do previously.

DEWS: That's all for this special edition of the Brookings Cafeteria

Podcast. I hope you enjoyed it and found it informative.

(Music plays)

DEWS: The Brookings cafeteria is brought to you by the Brookings Podcast Network. Follow us on Twitter @policypodcasts and subscribe to the show on Apple Podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts. If you visit Apple Podcasts, please leave us a review. It helps other listeners find the show.

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My sincere thanks to everyone who makes the show possible every week. The audio engineer is Gaston Reboredo, who is backed up from time to time by Mark Hoelscher and Ian McAllister. Chris McKenna and Brennan Hoban produce the show. Bill Finan did the interviews with the authors of eight Brookings Press books, and I look forward to more of his excellent interviews in the New Year.

Adrianna Pita is the host of our Intersections podcast and guest host of some episodes. Thank you for your excellent preparation and contribution.

I want to pay special recognition once again to Molly Reynolds and David Wessel, who both appeared on the show as a guest or contributor more than 10 times each this year to update us on what was happening in Congress and in the economy.

Our interns this year have included Lea Kayali, Sarah Minor, Megan Drake, Emma Russell, Sharon Burnea, Tim Madden, and Steven Lee. We couldn't do this show without you. And also my thanks to Jessica Pavone, Cameron Zotter, Eric Abalahin, and Rebecca Viser for their design and web support throughout the year, and to the social media team here, Amanda Waldron, Ashley Wood Schelling, and Ashley Fox for all they do to help promote podcast content. Thanks to Camilo Ramirez for his leadership of the Brookings Podcast Network and to David Nassar, vice president of Communications through June, and to Emily Horn, our vice

president since then, for other guidance and support.

And finally, thanks to you, the listeners, for downloading, sharing, and I hope enjoying the program.

Until next time, I'm Fred Dews. Happy New Year.

(Music plays)

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