

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION  
BROOKINGS CAFETERIA PODCAST  
PUTIN, TRUMP, AND THE ROAD TO AUTHORITARIANISM  
Washington, D.C.  
Friday, November 12, 2021

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

This episode has deep personal resonance for me, as it features my interview with two of the leading experts in the field of study that I set out to pursue when I went college long ago, and is a topic that remains as important to our world and daily lives as it was then. And that is Russia. But not just Russia's re-emergence as a great power after the Cold War ended, under the leadership of Vladimir Putin, but also more broadly how economic change, deindustrialization, and other forces open doors for populist leaders to rise in places like Russia, and the United States and the United Kingdom as well, as we've seen in recent years.

On this episode, you'll hear from Dr. Angela Stent, a nonresident senior fellow with the Center on the United States and Europe at Brookings and senior adviser to the Center for Eurasian, Russian and East European Studies and professor emerita of government and foreign service at Georgetown University, which is my alma mater. And also Dr. Fiona Hill, the Robert Bosch Senior Fellow in the Center on the United States and Europe. From 2017 to 2019, Hill served as deputy assistant to the president and senior director for European and Russian Affairs on the National Security Council. Both are authors of recently published books that I recommend you add to your reading list: Angela Stent's "Putin's World: Russia Against the West and with the Rest"; and Fiona Hill's "There Is Nothing for You Here; Finding Opportunity in the Twenty-First Century."

In this interview, my guests talk about how their careers in Soviet and Russian studies got started, the rise of Putin's Russia, how social and economic decay can lead to the rise of populist leaders, and how to revive opportunity in America.

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people driving them. 17 Rooms is a collaboration between the Center for Sustainable Development at Brookings and The Rockefeller Foundation.

And now, here's my interview with Angela Stent and Fiona Hill.

Dr. Angela Stent, Dr. Fiona Hill, welcome to the Brookings Cafeteria. I'm super excited to have you both on the show, not just because you're extraordinary Brookings colleagues, but also because you're experts in an area that I went to college to study, oh, a generation ago, the Soviet Union and Russia. I didn't pursue it, but I'm super thrilled to be talking to two of the leading experts on Soviet and Russian studies and Vladimir Putin. It's quite an honor.

I want to draw listeners' attention to your two wonderful books that I read to prepare for our conversation. There's "Putin's World: Russia against the West and with the Rest," by Angela, and "There Is Nothing for You Here: Finding Opportunity in the 21st Century," by Fiona, and we'll talk some more about those as we go along here.

I'd like to start with learning from you, how you got into Soviet and Russian studies. I think about my origin story in that field many years ago—I went to the Soviet Union when I was 16 on a high school trip. I fell in love with the place, the people, the language, the culture, wanted to study it. Went to Georgetown. Actually, Angela Stent, one of my professors there in Soviet foreign policy, back when we could do that. So, how did each of you get into Soviet and Russian studies in the first place? Fiona, could we maybe start with you?

HILL: Yeah, it was timing. And I mean, like you said, it was the Soviet Union. In fact, I think we're contemporaries in that regard. It wasn't a school trip to the Soviet Union. They didn't really do that from the UK at that point. I mean, perhaps, but certainly not in my neck of the woods. It was really as a result of these larger global affairs and the impact that it was having on myself and people around us. I mean, everything that happens in the world does have an impact at the very small level and the way that people see things.

And it was the 1980s, the early 1980s. It was before Gorbachev came on the scene, and it was the peak of the Cold War standoff over the stationing of missiles in Europe—the so-called Euro

Missile Crisis, which started in 1977 and ended in 1987. And I was basically going through high school at this point, and everybody was focused on the fact that we might get blown up, annihilated, obliterated, you name it, in an exchange between the Soviet Union and the United States. We felt like we were ground zero. And in fact, we were, as it turns out, because the whole debate was about the U.S. stationing Pershing missiles in Western Europe, including in the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union reciprocating with the staging of SS-20 missiles in Eastern Europe.

And this is the period of a Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. People may not remember this, but there were a group of Greenham Common women, so women who were basically protesting the use of nuclear missiles at an airbase in Greenham Common in the south of England. One of my mom's cousins was very active in that movement, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, and also in the Greenham Common's Women's Movement, they had a permanent peace encampment around the air base.

My mother's cousin, Dorothy, was a councilor for the local Labor government one town over, very active, we'd see her on television all the time, local television, protesting. And I also had this great uncle who had fought in the Second World War. He'd been in the Navy in these convoys, going from the United Kingdom, also Canada and the United States, across to the Soviet Union, to Murmansk and Archangelsk, these big ports, carrying supplies during the Soviet efforts to roll back Nazi Germany toward the end of the war.

And on the one hand, we have this scene of great anxiety, heightened tension about the possibility of a nuclear exchange between the Soviet Union and the United States affecting Britain. And then we still have these memories of World War II when the UK was part of an alliance against Nazi Germany. And looking at the Soviet Union then, at that particular juncture, the end of the war, as an ally. And my great uncle was basically saying to me, and my dad one day, What the hell is going on here? Why does the Soviet Union want to bloody well blows us up? We used to be allies. How did we get here? And he looks at me and he said, Well Fiona, you've been studying languages at school—I'd been doing French and German—Maybe that's what you should do. You

should go off and study Russian and figure it all out. I'm an impressionable kid. I'm thinking, oh my God, we're all going to be blown up. What's the whole point of everything? Nuclear Armageddon is on my horizon. Yeah, maybe I should go off and study Russian, and perhaps I could become an interpreter of a translator and help with some of these arms negotiations. So that's how I got started. It was 1983, 1984, and I decided to apply to college to study Russian.

DEWS: You relate this story in gripping detail in your book, "There Is Nothing for You Here." How about you, Angela? How did you get into Soviet, Russian studies?

STENT: So, my story is going to be a little bit different. I was at Cambridge University studying modern European history, and I just got very interested in Russia. I had a somewhat colorful professor, let's say, who'd been jailed by the Hungarians for trying to smuggle some, well he did smuggle people out eventually. And he really sparked my interest in Russian history.

So, I studied, and I didn't know a word of Russian. Unlike Fiona, I didn't study languages when I was an undergraduate. And between my second and third year at Cambridge University, my college gave me a grant. And so, I took a boat from just outside London, Tilbury, and I sailed to Leningrad as it then was, and I spent a week in the Soviet Union. I was in Leningrad, I was in Moscow, and I just got hooked on it.

Now this was 1968, so a little earlier than when Fiona first went. And I was there just before the tumultuous events in Czechoslovakia. So, I started off in the Soviet Union, and then I took the train, and I went to Warsaw. I then went to what's now Wrocław, and both of my grandmothers had come from what was then Breslau before this became Poland. And so, this was a time when Poland was in ferment, rebelling. And I met students and things like that. We were able to communicate. And then I finally went to Prague, which was very exciting. I was there a couple of weeks before the Soviet invasion, again meeting students, talking in different languages, English, German, whatever. Seeing all the demonstrations. And then finally, going by train through East Germany and seeing, I mean, I'll never forget my first experience of seeing as we got into the station there and looking out, and I thought that I was seeing statues of people with guns. But in fact, this was in East

Berlin, and they had the soldiers there with their guns pointing down in case someone was trying to escape. Anyway, and then going to East Germany through there.

So, I got hooked on the whole subject. And then when I did a master's degree at the London School of Economics, I started studying Russian, and then I came over to the United States and did a master's degree in Soviet studies, which Fiona later on also did. And that's where I learned most of my Russian. But I was very interested in the politics of it. And it was this journey when I was an undergraduate that really persuaded me that that's what I wanted to do.

DEWS: I learned from Fiona's book that you blazed a trail in Soviet and Russian studies and that you've been a mentor to Fiona throughout her career in both government and in collaborations at Brookings and beyond. Can you talk about how your perspectives on Soviet, Russian studies might differ based on when you entered the field?

STENT: My first prolonged experience in the Soviet Union was in 1974. I was a graduate student at Moscow State University. And that was at the height of the Watergate crisis, if you like, here in the United States. So, I was there for a longer period of time during the Brezhnev era when you'd had detente, and you had all the, you had Nixon under fire. And it was very interesting to me that the Russians, at least officially in the lectures I heard, all thought that the reason there was Watergate was it was an attack on Nixon because he wanted detente with the Soviet Union. It was very funny. So, everything they saw through their own eyes. So I think that was my introduction.

And I was there at a time, of course, that was much more repressive. My uncle was a molecular geneticist, and his textbooks were published in the Soviet Union, and he had a number of very interesting colleagues there, including some who had worked at this institute, the doctors, which was where Stalin had attacked them in 1953 shortly before he died, accusing them of trying to kill him. So that experience to me was very interesting.

And then moving with a group of people who were at that point, dissidents, underground artists and other people. And then also learning the skills then of how you communicate with people in the society where everyone is watched all the time, and you only had real conversations if you're

out in the open. But the other point, and I'll be interested to see what it was like when Fiona was there, if there was something wrong in our dorm rooms, in the communal kitchen, we would complain loudly in our rooms and somehow, surprisingly, it would be taken care of. So that first and indelible experience, I think, was at a time when, in a way, at the height of Soviet power at that point, but also in a very repressive era.

HILL: I think listening to this, Fred, I mean to me, it's just fascinating, I've always been really fascinated by Angela and others' experience in these different timeframes, because it's very important to see how things changed. And so, as I mentioned, I got interested in Russia because it was the height of the Cold War. But it really wasn't the peak of Soviet power, as Angela is describing. And Angela also, coming from the UK, but also coming from Europe—your family, Angela, originally came from Germany and then obviously left around the time of World War II—but as you said, they'd got all these connections from being part of scientific and other circles in Germany and then in the UK and then in the United States and had all these scientific and other connections. And you have this insight that most of the people wouldn't have got into the whole world of when the Soviet Union is really, as you said, at its peak in the 1960s and '70s, and is also really oppressing the rest of the Eastern bloc, including Germany and Poland and Hungary, and what was then Czechoslovakia.

So, I actually get to the Soviet Union as it was at the very end, really, of the Soviet period. We didn't know it, but you could feel it. So, I got a scholarship to study in the Soviet Union in 1987 when I'm still an undergraduate at St Andrews in Scotland. And that's my first visit. I didn't have any other visits to the Soviet Union until I go whole hog for a whole year with a scholarship from the British Council, Russian Language Undergraduate Study Committee.

And I get out there in the fall of 1987. And having been propelled forward by these real concerns about nuclear exchanges, the risk of nuclear war, and what would happen in the aftermath, I'm there when Gorbachev and Reagan signed the INF Treaty, the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty, pretty much putting paid to this 10 year-long cycle of nuclear confrontation and real anxiety

in Europe about this. I mean, everybody from my generation in Europe, not just the UK but in Germany and elsewhere, is shaped by those nuclear fears, it's the sum of all of our fears. We've been all kind of propelled forward, either through protests or trying to take some concrete action.

But as soon as I get to the Soviet Union, I'm aware of what the state of decay is. So, I get there in *perestroika*, *glasnost*, great opening. So, it's not quite like Angela's experiencing. Everybody's opening up, Gorbachev's actually examining all of the black spots of the past. They're encouraging people to get out there and talk about things. There's still surveillance, because like Angela, we can talk about things, the next thing things happen. I even have phone calls back to my parents, I'm complaining about the lack of food because the point is there's nothing in the shops, there's no food anywhere, which is a bit different from the '70s. And someone breaks in and says, in Russian, Girl, if you continue to say things like that, you won't speak to your parents again. And I go, Oh! And there's a blip back on, and my mom and dad said, what happened? No, it's just a break in the line, Mom and Dad. Things are fine, things are great here. I cut off the commentary about the fact that all I've eaten for several days is a piece of cheese and some moldy old bread. But anyway, no worries whatsoever, you know, talking about the wonders of the Soviet Union.

Because at this period, there literally was nothing of the shops, the whole central planning was breaking down. There's lots of demand, but everything is crumbling. The infrastructure is falling apart. And it really reminded me of the northeast of England, and, you know, as I lay out in the book, because I, coming from this whole place of post-industrial decay and decline, everything's closing down, there was no demand because people didn't have any money. So, the supply-demand equation was flipped on its head.

But in the Soviet Union at that period, I was greatly disturbed by the state of the infrastructure, the state of the country, and kept thinking to myself, really? This is the superpower that we've all been so terrified about? And like Angela, and like you, I got hooked on the people, the culture, everything opening up. Just a whole different vantage point because there was so much excitement in the culture, there were all kinds of Western concerts happening. Everyone will

remember the famous concert of Elton John and others, Back in the USSR. But while I'm there, there are so many Western groups coming, and there's this whole youth culture that I can participate in as this all emerges. It's not the kind of dissident underground literary culture that Angela experienced in the '70s. It's actually out in the open and people are actively dressing differently, talking openly. It really had a feeling of mass transformation at the same time that there's this decay and decline, and you can tell that the Soviet Union's in trouble.

STENT: So, I did go back to the Soviet Union in 1986. So just before Fiona came, and at that point I was a professor. I also went there with a one-year-old child and my husband, who was doing research on a book. And we got there the week before Chernobyl. And we were living in a rather nice apartment. And we heard about this on the BBC, listening to foreign radio that something had happened. I had to give a talk early on. I was at a big international relations institute with my affiliation. And I was trying to give a forward-looking talk about U.S.-Soviet relations. And afterwards the person who introduced me kind of accused the United States of making up information about Chernobyl, that there'd be no accident or anything.

And during the month that I was there, of course, that was when the crucial time when Gorbachev eventually admitted that a catastrophe had happened, that there was a major incident. He accepted outside help. And by the time I left, the person privately said to me, not publicly, I'm so glad that our countries could work together now to deal with this disaster that we've had. But that was a fascinating period just in that one month seeing the Soviet system going from complete denial about what had happened to finally admitting it. And I think by the time Fiona got there, then you had this great opening up.

DEWS: Let's move on to a deeper dive into both of your books. I feel like I'm in a master class here, so I want to make sure that we have some time to talk about some of the themes, some of the lessons that I took away. And let's start with you, Fiona. "There Is Nothing for You Here." A key takeaway from the book that I have, and you referenced it a few minutes ago, is your lived experience of the parallels across your home in the northeast of England with that of Russia and the

United States when you came to study at Harvard. And that's the social and economic decay and how that has facilitated the rise of populists and what you call an ongoing democratic crisis.

HILL: Everyone's got their own vantage point. And mine was, I suppose, somewhat unusual, although there were other students on my program for the year in Moscow, 1987 to 1988, who came from similar sort of backgrounds to me. But I was the daughter of a coal miner, a former coal miner. My dad had lost his jobs in the coal mines in the '60s and had then gone on to work in a hospital as a porter, an auxiliary ancillary worker, very much on the kind of lowest rung of the economic ladder. But he'd always got this identity as a miner foremost in his mind, all he talked about.

And it's similar when you get to the Soviet Union, it's a country of the workers. And the aristocracy in many respects is not the aristocracy of old—the Boyars and the relations of the tsars, of course, they've long gone. But the Soviet aristocracy is the workers and the peasants, and among those workers coal miners really stand out. There's lots of mythologizing about the super heroic miners.

And so as soon as I said that I was the daughter of a miner, I was vaulted up in Soviet society. Because I'd gone to university against the back[drop] of the 1984 miners' strike, 1984-1985 miners' strike, which was the biggest industrial action in UK history, with the exception of the 1926 general strike, which had brought pretty much the entire country up. But it was a really wrenching event, and it had marked the end of the coal industry in the United Kingdom.

But during that period, miners' unions such as they were in the Soviet Union, these were highly constrained and, as Angela and you and everybody else knows, they were often manipulated and used as tools not for collective bargaining internally, but for projection outside of the kind of workers organization and the Soviet Union. But they'd actually collected money for the miners of the UK, and some of that money from, weirdly enough, the miners of the Donbas in what is now Ukraine—and of course, at the center of all kinds of conflict between Russia and Ukraine right now, with Russia really stirring the pot in Donbas and fomenting essentially civil strife there, and

essentially occupying it now with Russian-backed rebel forces. The miners of the Donbas' money had gone to the Durham miners and some of that money I'd actually had as a small grant to start to study Russian.

So, you know, I get there, and I have this story, and I see right away all of the parallels, because I'm immediately kind of brought into all of these workers' circles. I do a lot of things that the Soviet kids from workers' backgrounds do. I see sort of social mobility there just as well as I see the decay of the state.

And then fast-forward when I get my scholarship to Harvard in 1989, again following Angela's trail, because I go off to study Soviet studies—it's the kind of like you, Fred you said the same thing, in that last cohort of people who can study Soviet studies because by 1991, bye bye Soviet Union and my degree is already obsolete. I just got it, you know, and a few months later the Soviet Union had gone.

I actually was shocked to see the same things in Cambridge, Mass. You know, I walk outside of the gates of Harvard and this just sort of wonderful academic and really superb environment. And East Cambridge, Somerville, all the suburbs around the Harvard campus are also going through a period of decline. Their big manufacturing plants are closing down. And you can see the kind of distress there, this is the late 1980s. It's before Massachusetts and Boston have their bounce back in the new modernized knowledge economy.

And I'm surprised, then, to suddenly see, Hey, this is happening everywhere. It's not just the northeast of England where I grew up. But there's this big economic transition going on, and I need to understand more about it. So, I move in many respects from that Soviet studies course, from studying just history because, you know, like Angela and you, I'd gone off a different track—I'd been studying Russian and modern European history at St. Andrew's, concentrating mostly on Russia and Eastern Europe. But when I get to Harvard and I see, gosh, all this is happening everywhere, there's a thread here, because I'm seeing it from my own vantage point. I start to start

studying political economy and social economic history and the opportunity that I have there to try to understand what's happening.

DEWS: And you write in the book a passage that really struck me hard, and I can't stop thinking about it. And I think it describes a through line from that time when you arrived at Harvard to the present political and social and economic conditions that we find ourselves in. And you write, "Russia is America's Ghost of Christmas future." Why is that?

HILL: Well, that's more about the contemporary period, but that through line from the 1980s and seeing the developments there, I see a continuum as I outline in the book. Because for decades nothing happened in many of these post-industrial landscapes and many of the cities and towns that got left behind as the new economy emerged, the knowledge economy—automation and modernization, financial and service sectors growing up. Boston moved on, although one could argue there's parts of Massachusetts and some of the suburbs around Boston are still in some degrees of difficulty. Not everybody was able to take advantage of the new economic developments and all the educational opportunities.

But, you know, there's large swaths of Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union that get left behind as well. And what's interesting about the bases, the political base of Vladimir Putin and of Donald Trump—they're very similar. Putin's base is really in the old industrial heartland of Russia, although the heartland is huge, it spreads across Siberia, the Urals, you know, and elsewhere. It's not in the cities, it's not in Moscow and St. Petersburg. It's in the Soviet-era industrial cities, the Russian Rust Belt. Same as it is in the United States. Because people kind of feel that they need the state to intervene, or they need someone to intervene to turn things around for them.

And it's that worry about where Russia headed—and Angela can chime in on this—over the course of the 1990s and 2000s that I put out there as the kind of the specter of the Ghost of Christmas future. And when I use that image of the Ghost of Christmas future—obviously being a Brit, I grew up on Charles Dickens. But the important thing about Scrooge is he gets the message.

It's a spectral vision. It's his own nightmare. It's his own dream. It isn't something that comes into reality, but it's a kind of a warning to him of things that could happen, that haven't quite taken shape at this point. And that's what I mean about looking at Russia as a lesson for the United States and also for the United Kingdom, frankly.

After the Soviet Union collapsed in the 1990s, Russia went through an incredibly wrenching period of socioeconomic dislocation and political dislocation. There was the opening and the flourishing that Gorbachev set underway in the political sphere, more pluralism, emergence of political parties. But in many respects, the Russians thought democratic experimentation, democratization, didn't turn out as they'd hoped. There wasn't a transformation of their material lives overnight. In fact, many of them were in much harder straits, much more dire straits than they had been in the '70s, when Angela was there. They felt that they'd lost everything, and they lost their identity. The whole story of the 1990s is one of loss, not just of opportunity.

And Putin comes in in the end of the 1990s, December 1999, and basically says I'm going to fix it all. And over the next 21 years that he's been in power, he's also fixed himself in the Kremlin, rolled back a lot of the pluralism, rolled back a lot of the democratic gains, and put Russia on a very different trajectory. It's a more authoritarian state than it was before. He's busted through term limits. I mean, he could essentially be President Putin in perpetuity. And there's an awful lot more in Russia's future that has darker tones than there certainly would have been when Angela and I and others were first there, when we saw all of this change and the openness, that the country's closing back down again. And unfortunately, I see a lot of parallels with what's happening right now here in the United States.

DEWS: That story of loss, I think, is an excellent segue to talk about Angela's book "Putin's World." Angela, you so well document, not just the rise of Putin over the last 20 years, but it's couched in Soviet and Russian history. Soviet and Russian foreign policy, their outlook on the world. And a key lesson that I take away from your book is that one of Putin's main goals since he came to power in 2000 has been restoring Russia as a great power and dominating Eurasia as an

essential component of that. And again, all in the backdrop of this end of the Cold War, economic dislocation in the former Soviet Union. Can you talk about that period?

STENT: Sure. So, I think you have to remember, talking about Putin for a minute— and of course, Fiona has also written a great book called “Mr. Putin: Operative in the Kremlin”—if you go back to Putin’s background, right, he’s a KGB operative. He is sent to East Germany in 1985, just when Gorbachev comes to power. He is in Dresden, which was one of the few cities in the GDR that didn’t get West German television, so it was kind of more isolated, even from places like East Berlin. So, he’s a middle ranking KGB case officer from Leningrad as opposed to Moscow, so he’s sort of an outsider there. And he’s not in East Berlin. But he there he is as a case officer in the GDR.

And then when the Berlin Wall comes down, the mob comes to the building where he was working, co-located with the East German secret services, the Stasi. And they demand to see their files. And so, in the autobiographical interview that Putin gave and was published in the year 2000, when he first ascended to the presidency, he talks about them stuffing all the files in the furnace trying to burn them, and the furnace then explodes, et cetera, et cetera.

So, he had this experience himself as a young man of the mob demanding to see their files, and no one in Moscow gave him any guidance. And I think this is a rather formative experience on the way he views, then, what happened the ‘90s. And he missed the entire Gorbachev period in the Soviet Union, so he never lived through the *glasnost*, and again he was a KGB officer.

So in the 1990s, paradoxically, while all of what Fiona described was happening, and most people’s living standards fell, some people became incredibly rich. You have the rise of the oligarchs. What was Putin himself doing? He eventually got himself a job as a deputy mayor in St. Petersburg, dealing largely with foreign economic contacts. And that’s when he began with some of his friends to accumulate the wealth that they have now continued to accumulate since then.

So his personal experience of the 1990s, I guess wasn’t that bad. But he also saw what happened when the mayor of St. Petersburg—Sobchak, his mentor in many ways, he’d been his

professor at the university—when he was defeated in what was a rather dirty election in 1996. And I think what Putin took away from that was you can't leave elections to chance because if you can't guarantee that your guy is going to get elected, you shouldn't have elections.

And he did experience, then, the foreign policy, what he would then later describe as humiliation during the 1990s, of Russia essentially following, supporting the United States' and the Europeans' say in the wars in the Balkans and culminating in the Kosovo war, when a very ailing and disillusioned Yeltsin disagreed with what the United States was doing.

So, I think it's important to remember that we in the West look at the 1990s, as Fiona has said, as a period of—which it was—of much greater pluralism, freedom of expression. It was chaotic. One thing that Yeltsin never did was to reform the intelligence services because he said that was the one thing that functioned properly in the Soviet Union. That I think was a big mistake because you get a lot of these people and all the resentments they have, and they're still there in the 1990s.

So, by the time Putin is picked by Yeltsin and his family to take over, Russia has experienced a financial crash in 1998, a lot of people have lost their savings. So, he definitely, when he came to power, saw it as his goal to try and reverse all of this chaos, to make Russia respected again, to return it to being what it should be—a great power. And he was very lucky because in the first eight years when he was in office, oil prices were rising. As you know, at that point about 60 percent, at least, of Russia's budget came from earnings from oil and gas, and oil prices rose and rose, Russia's growth rate rose 7 percent per year between 2000 and 2008. Russians felt more secure financially. They saw their standard of living rise. And therefore, they were supportive of what Putin was doing.

And then of course, after 2008 you had the crash, it's been more challenging for Russia economically. But Putin has managed to restore Russia in those years to a position as a great power. And of course, he's also, as Fiona has said, clamped down domestically, and by now has virtually

gotten rid of all of the opposition or most of the opposition. Democratic opposition people have left the country. And he was able to do that because he had a plan.

But I think the other thing we have to say about Putin himself is he was very adept at making the best of opportunities that were presented to him by the West, by things that the West didn't do, by its own distraction. And he's now been in power for 21 years. He's outlived countless U.S. presidents and European leaders as well. And he's seen that as his mission. He has also brought to power in the people who surround him, either in the government or even in the so-called private sector, come from the security services. And so, their mindset again has been very much shaped by the Soviet era security service.

DEWS: Yeah, like Fiona said, I also graduated from college in Soviet and Russian studies at the very end of the Soviet period, and in fact, the year I graduated in 1991 was the year the Soviet Union fell, and my degree became a history degree. But then I pursued other interests and only casually paid attention to what was going on in the former Soviet sphere and in the newly independent states. And so, I think I probably shared the zeitgeist of a lot of people in the West that looked at the end of the Cold War as a big triumph for the West, and that it was a great thing that the former Soviet Union was democratizing and getting into a more capitalist economy. And it seems like that zeitgeist was less wrong and perhaps kind of obscured some other things going on in our own cultures.

HILL: I don't know whether it was actually wrong, Fred. I mean, you and I got our degrees in exactly the same time, and then I went on to do a history Ph.D. precisely because that degree was history, and the Soviet Union was history. But I think when you put into this kind of larger historical context, we've seen Russia go through phases of reform throughout its modern history, let's say. And the emergence of the more kind of pluralistic approach, leadership matters a lot. I mean, Gorbachev was a bit of a surprise. Angela, I'm sure even you would say that, you know, from your time there. He was ostensibly a student, so to speak, not directly of course, but a protege of Yuri Andropov, who was previous general secretary of the Soviet Union and was the head of the

KGB for a while and was very concerned about precisely the dissident movements emerging around the eastern bloc that Angela saw. He understood what was generating this, was these pent-up desires, not just for freedom of expression and, you know, independence from the control of Moscow, but also the kind of people wanting to see more, they wanted more opportunity to express themselves, more economic opportunity, that the whole system was in trouble, and something had to be done. And I think we're getting to that climbing again in Russia.

I think that our problem, and whenever we look at Russia, we don't look at this larger sweep, we don't put it into context, we look at the snapshots of our own eras. What we see from the outside in the 1990s, for example, rather than seeing this larger context Angela describes in her book, how the Russians look at the world and how they see, they live in their history all the time. That's actually in the book that Cliff Gaddy and I wrote on Putin, we have the history man, because Putin is living out of Russian history the whole time. He sees himself as Vladimir the Great, he sees himself in a long line of Russian tsars, not just of Soviet leaders. And obviously he's the new Russian leader. He annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014, saying he was returning back the patrimony of Russia, the Russian Empire, the Soviet empire. I mean, there was a lot of mythologizing around this, but he's sort of seeing himself as doing the kinds of things that Russians stretching back centuries, Russian leaders, have done.

And he's got a particular perspective, but Gorbachev had a different perspective. And Dmitri Medvedev, who stood in for Putin from one of the periods where he wasn't president, because he was actually prime minister, still running the show from 2007 and '08 to 2011 and '12, Medvedev had a very different view because Medvedev was in Russia, the Soviet Union, during *perestroika*. That period of the 1990s, he thought it was great as well. He had an opportunity to do things on his own for the first time. He'd also studied at Leningrad State University like Putin had, but quite a few years afterwards. He'd studied law and he starts working at a private law firm. He also starts working with Putin in the mayor's office in what's now St. Petersburg. And he just has a different sort of sunny outlook, one might say, on the world. Not quite the same dark lens that Putin looks at

it through. He saw opportunity and possibility, not loss as Putin might have seen it. He didn't have those same personal experiences, so he brings a different sensibility to his time. There's more of an opening up, we think again. That's the period when we, the United States under President Obama, tried to reset the relationship. Of course, that didn't pan out quite as planned.

But I do think that if we look ahead, we have to be open to the fact that there can be change again, that Putin can't possibly stay in power forever because eventually we all die. No matter how much we try to turn back the clock, it kind of keeps on ticking. And Putin will be in 2036, if he stays in power that long, 84-years-old, and I'm sure he'll still be striving to look like a vibrant 84-year-old. I doubt he'll be bare chested and swimming across Siberian lakes and rivers or playing ice hockey with the same kind of verve that he does now and all the other exploits that we've seen him up to. But he has to now start thinking about Russia's future, not just his own future. And there will be other generations that will come in who might have different viewpoints.

STENT: No, I think that's the paradox because we look at him and we see that he's eliminated all opposition. They just had Duma elections to the parliament where the party with which he's associated has a super majority. Everything looks stable. The economy is doing better this year than it was coming out of the pandemic. And yet we know that underneath that, there's all this questioning about, as you have in any authoritarian regime, how do you leave power and what happens afterwards? And a great deal of, I think, nervousness about that. And you certainly see, if you look at public opinion polls in Russia, a majority of people want change. And particularly younger people, particularly people who've never known any other leader. So, I think that's, all of us who study Russia and the Soviet Union know that everything appears to be stable, and we think it's going to continue in a linear fashion, and then suddenly we're shocked and surprised by what happened. So, I think we just have to bear that in mind when we think about the future, then.

DEWS: I want to stay on Putin for a few more minutes and bring in the former president of the United States, Donald Trump, and kind of talk about the intersection of geopolitics and populism that is so much on our minds these days. Fiona, you served on the National Security

Council during part of the Trump administration, and you write masterfully in your book a lot of your observations about that time, about the way the Trump administration functioned, and people can read the book and people can hear you talk about that in a lot of other venues. But what I want to ask you about is this idea that while Trump and Putin have a lot in common in terms of being populist leaders, you note that there are important differences between them. Why is that an important distinction?

HILL: Well, those distinctions come out of our different histories. So, although, I've talked about Russia being the Ghost of Christmas Future—and again, a ghost is a spectral apparition—there's no real substance to the systems in terms of comparisons. You can't say that the Russian and the United States systems are similar. However, the presidencies, and nature of the presidencies, have started to take on some similar attributes. And the fact that over time here in the United States, we tend to fetishize the presidency. I mean, there were much more checks and balances in the system when I came to the United States in 1989, and I'm sure, I mean Angela's referenced Nixon, in that period Nixon did get checked back in the day, it was much more difficult for him to sort of prevail over the system and he ended up having to leave office after he committed a whole number of abuses of power. And, in the case of President Trump, he survived two impeachment hearings and certainly didn't see it kind of fit to resign in any kind of way in the way that the way that Nixon did.

And also the presidency in the United States, it's sort of three-in-one, a triumvirate approach to the presidency—head of state, the commander in chief, and the chief executive. So, there's no prime ministerial function. And there ought to be a political party, the presidency is supposed to be rooted in a political party, and Angela referenced the fact that Putin is associated with the party, the ruling party, the party of power, but he isn't part of the party. He didn't even run on the party ticket. And Trump, President Trump, has recently declared, certainly after the November 2020 election, that there is no such thing as the congressional Republican Party or the party apparatus. And even as the Republican part—, it's just the Republican Party of Trump, really personalizing this.

And in Russia, all of the kind of political movements or parties that have supported Putin have just been vehicles for him. So, there's this hyper personalization. And the Russian president, in the Constitution, and this goes back to the Yeltsin era, has accrued more and more powers. And some of legal scholars who helped draw up the Russian constitution back in the 1990s under Yeltsin, they included Anatoly Sobchak, in fact, Putin's law professor and boss as mayor of Leningrad, St. Petersburg. He was a constitutional law scholar. And their vision of the Russian presidency was like a constitutional monarch, but not a monarch, a constitutional monarch like the Queen of England, who doesn't really have any power, but kind of putting the president in a monarchical position as head of state, even though there's a prime minister function, and really being the power above all powers, but with fewer checks and balances. And Putin's amendments and tinkering around with the Constitution, enabling him to bust through the term limits, have put the presidency above everything was just the people in a kind of a direct relationship, and that's what we're starting to have here in the United States as well.

And that's what I'm greatly concerned about. It's those sorts of features that have started to emerge, particularly under Trump, who personalized the presidency more than any other predecessor. When we had these debates and under previous presidents like George W. Bush about executive power, when Vice President Cheney was pushing for the elevation of the executive branch over the Congress and other parts of the U.S. government, it was really as a branch of executive power. It was emphasizing the power of the executive branch, not the power of the individual executive, the president themselves. And an awful lot of people in the U.S. system have enabled this process, perhaps inadvertently focusing in on the person, the presidents. Not anticipating, just as Yeltsin didn't anticipate when he was messing about with the Constitution in the 1990s, that you might get someone in with a very different sensibility and a very different intent of how to use the powers of that presidency. And that's where we are now in the United States, that Donald Trump, during his time in office, attempted to use the presidency for his own personal,

political, and private purposes. And we've seen that with Putin, although there's larger circles of power around him in Russia.

DEWS: But there are key differences between Trump and Putin?

HILL: Well, I mean, of course there are, but it's that of really accruing of power, that desire to accrue power and to use that for purposes to ... Look, Angela has also talked about in the context of Putin when she laid out Putin's worldview, that he and the people around him, going back for decades before they got into the presidency, had started to accrue massive wealth. And this is now a factor of the system.

We have a colleague, Dmitri Trenin, who's the head of the Carnegie Moscow office, who's talked about Russia being run by the people who own it because Putin and the oligarchs—and many of them his personal friends dating back to his childhood actually in St Petersburg, and then later people that he worked with in the mayor's office, and then people he's worked with the KGB or the FSB, and, you know, moving on forward—they've all accrued huge wealth. And part of Putin's effort right now by putting people like Alexei Navalny, the opposition leader, in jail is to stop them from basically opening up essentially all the information about the money that they've accumulated.

And we saw, sadly, under President Trump the efforts to move loyalists into key positions where they could also have influence on taxation, regulation. He emphasized billionaires and making sure that billionaires, rather than the American people—these professing to be in office to serve and to benefit—would continue to accrue wealth.

We've noticed as well, sadly, that he did not make firewalls between his own private businesses and his public life, bringing members of his family into positions in the White House, et cetera.

So, sadly, we've started to see some of the same developments in the United States as we've seen in Russia, notwithstanding all of the differences. And we've also seen a lot of chipping away at those checks and balances against the presidency and oversight. As of yet, we haven't been able to hold President Trump and others around him to account for abuses of power. And in fact, you

know, there's active efforts to push back investigations not just into what happened on January sixth, but into investigations of other impropriety. Very different from what we saw earlier, as Angela described in the Nixon era.

STENT: A major difference is, Trump was voted out of office, even if he ...

HILL: ... correct ...

STENT: ... his followers believe that he wasn't. And that's not going to happen to Putin. If he were to leave office, well, it would either be a managed transition, or it would be possibly like a palace coup. But at least we do in this country still have a regularized mechanism of succession, which is something that Russia has never had in its thousands of years of history.

But I think the concern is that the kinds of things that Trump was doing, and particularly if he were to come back to power, that that also has been challenged. Because again, of this questioning of what happened during the election, of all these state officials trying to revise election laws and things like that. And I think that's one of the things that we really do have to be concerned about, is the erosion of sort of belief in the somewhat arcane system we have.

And I would just add, like Fiona I'm a naturalized American citizen, and I had to study carefully for my naturalization exam. And never in anything that I read did I believe that executive power could be as extensive as it became during the Trump administration. And I think that is something that really is very worrying, that we do theoretically have checks and balances, but in the past four years they didn't work so well.

DEWS: There's a widespread sense, well-founded, I think, that America today is divided politically, socially, economically to a degree that maybe it hasn't been in generations. And we know that Putin and Russia interfered to some degree in the 2016 presidential election. You both talk about that in your book and people can go learn more about that. But there's a sense that Putin has an interest in weakening the Western alliance, for example. Angela, you write in your book a lot about how in Putin's near abroad and Russia's near abroad, Putin has an interest in keeping states like Georgia and Ukraine destabilized. Does Putin have that same interest when it comes to the

United States? Or is there too much internal division in America, is there too much weakness in America or retrenchment from the world stage for even Putin?

STENT: So, I think if you look at what happened in 2016, at that point, we have to remember that what the Russians did was to take advantage of divisions that were already there. They did not create the divisions, but they were able to benefit from them and then through the use of social media and other means, manipulate them. And clearly, at that point, they wanted Trump to come to power because Trump had said very flattering things about Putin during the campaign. He implied that Ukraine really was Russian. I mean, a lot of other things. So, from their point of view, why not try and benefit from what they saw as all the divisions in our own country?

And don't forget, Putin at that point still apparently believed that the big demonstrations that took place in Moscow in December of 2011, protesting the results of the Duma elections, that they were somehow paid for by Hillary Clinton, then secretary of state. In other words, that the United States had interfered in the Russian electoral system. So, the U.S. electoral system was fair game.

Anyway, Donald Trump gets elected. But then I think what the Russians didn't realize was the consequences of the knowledge that they had interfered in the election made it impossible for President Trump to pursue the kinds of policies he apparently wanted to pursue and improve the relationship with Russia, because Russia became such a toxic subject domestically in the United States that it was really impossible to do much. And of course, the Congress acted by imposing lots of sanctions, not to go into the whole history of that.

So, I think by the end of the Trump administration, I think the Russians were rethinking whether maybe they had gone too far in 2016. And from what we know publicly about what happened in 2020, there was some interference, but not as much. And at the very end Putin sort of seemed to walk some of that back.

So, I think, yes, in principle, the idea of aiding and abetting and taking advantage of American divisions appeals to them, and that's what they want to do. And it's the same in Europe,

set different groups against each other and prevent people from having a harder line policy maybe toward Russia.

But I think they've begun to understand the limits of that. And I think it'll be interesting to see—we know that there are talks going on now between the United States and Russia that have to do with ransomware and other cyber issues. Do we make any progress on that? I don't know whether we will or not, but I think that there is a recognition that they may have gone too far in what they did and that in the end was antithetical to their own interests.

HILL: Yeah, I think there's a really interesting point in all of this. They wanted us to know that they'd done this. But like everyone else, they actually did think that Hillary Clinton would win the election. And they wanted to really hurt her in the way that, as Angela said, Putin thinks she hurt him. Of course, they couldn't admit that the domestic problems and the opposition to Putin returning in 2011 was domestically generated.

But just like here, we had the same problem. After 2016, many people started blaming Putin for electing Trump rather than actually looking at the grievances, frustrations, and desires of the electorate that voted for him. And it was too easy, just like for Putin back in 2011, to blame protests on somebody else, not on the fact that a lot of people wanted some change, even there they actually kind of liked having Dmitri Medvedev in place and didn't necessarily want Putin back. And that becomes a problem.

But they wanted to show us just what they could do. They were thrilled to pieces, certainly in the Kremlin and security services, they made this very clear, that they were being credited with the outcome of the 2016 election. And then they thought we'd all move on, as Angela is sort of suggesting—this is fair game and we did to you what you did to us, but in fact we hadn't done it to them in 2011. And they thought that we just kind of get over it. And they couldn't believe that we wouldn't because I don't think that they fully realized just how fragile and vulnerable the United States political system was at that point to that kind of stirring the pot. I think they actually thought that we were a bit more together. This was just a political game for them, as Angela is sort of

suggesting, it's a fair game, this was kind of an intel game. They're sort of showing us that they still had what it took.

And they actually don't want the United States to collapse completely into kind of chaos because they want something out of it. Putin did want a deal, he was hoping when he sat down with Trump, because Trump had actually made it very clear that the kind of deal that he wanted with the Russians was a nuclear arms deal. The Russians wanted that to. But they couldn't get anything because no matter how much Putin, you know, manipulated or courted Trump and how much Trump wanted to sit down with Putin to get things done, the rest of the whole system was in so much disarray and so much focused on Russia, as Angela said, as something toxic, alien that they had to kind of get rid of and push back against, that it was actually impossible.

And the other thing is that Putin at home—I mean, this is also a very interesting factor—he doesn't want to sow disunity. He wants to weaken NATO, European Union, weaken individual countries so that, as Angela suggests, they'll have less collective action against Russia or less hostile politics towards Russia, he wants to get rid of sanctions. In fact, he's got more over this time rather than less. But he also wants to have some kind of coherence. So that again, Russia can have treaties and agreements. And he also wants to maintain unity at home. And some of the chaos on the Western front may spillover into Russia as well. If we can't get anything done on anything it actually does make the world a more uncertain and difficult place for Putin. Because Putin, while he stokes division, again, as I said, abroad he really wants to keep everyone together at home because division at home is a disaster. And each time that the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union's been brought down, as we all know from being students of Russian and Soviet history, it's been because of internal contradictions, ethnic disputes, political disputes, socioeconomic crisis. And so, Putin's job is to kind of keep it all together at the home front, and again if it gets too much out of whack basically internationally, that will make it more difficult for him to maneuver as well. It becomes a much more uncertain and unpredictable environment in which Russia is operating.

DEWS: And so as we wrap up this fascinating conversation about these topics, I'm trying to think of a synthesis between your two books as we look forward. And I think I have it, I'm not sure. So, I want to put this to both of you. Fiona, you write about in your book reviving opportunity in America. You just talked about the fragility and the vulnerability and grievance in our socioeconomic, political system that's causing weakness and internal division in America. And you call the infrastructure of opportunity an ethical and existential imperative as far as democracy is concerned. So, I want you to comment on that. At the same time, that seems to me to be the ingredients we need for a more stable U.S. political system that will then translate on the world stage for a healthy, vibrant American foreign policy to deal with a whole myriad of issues but including Putin and Russia. So, I would ask Angela, in the context of America as a stable, vibrant, healthy, functioning political system, what is the best path forward in terms of U.S. relations with Russia? Fiona, can we start with you on the opportunity side?

HILL: Yeah. Infrastructure of opportunity, opportunity, this is all about giving people the chance to have a job and, you know, a future, not just sort of living hand-to-mouth and basically surviving. And interestingly in, kind of throw this over to Angela, that's what Putin's challenge is, too. We've been describing all of these upsurging protests, demonstrations, frustrations in Russia, the Soviet Union, the Eastern Bloc, going back to Angela's descriptions of the 1960s and 1970s when she first gets there. And, why were Hungarians and Czechs and Slovaks and Poles and others frustrated? Because they didn't see a future. And they weren't kind of feeling that they were going to kind of moving off into something that was going to be an improvement in their life.

Same with the *perestroika* period. Gorbachev's initially reacting to the fact, the thing that I saw when I got there, which is that the whole system has ground to a halt. It's no longer providing, central planning is not working, and the economic system isn't living up to people's basic demands. Half the time, it's just basic food items and clothing items in short supply. And so, everybody's trying to change this, and Putin said he's going to fix it. Well, people keep on expecting, in the Russian context if Putin is going to stay in power till 2036, it had better mean something. And if

you're getting this guy forever in perpetuity, how are you and a younger person—and for some generations this is the only, I mean for God's sake, people will be 36 by the time he goes out of office and some of them will be even older, he'll be the only person that they've ever known, the head of the country. What is he offering them?

And this is really what the crux of the American system is right now. When Joe Biden made his speech, his inauguration speech, I was really struck. I mean, I'd already chosen the title of the book, but he says one of the major values in American life is opportunity, one of the things that we hold the most valuable. It's basically the essence of the American dream, it's why Angela and I came to the United States at our different times. We came for the opportunity to have a fantastic education at Harvard. We came on grants. I mean, what an opportunity for both of us through education. Angela is a double immigrant, you know, first her family to the UK from Germany and then to the United States. And each time what do you do as an immigrant? You're looking for that opportunity for a better life and you're moving from somewhere that hasn't necessarily given it to you. And that's been the whole ethos, though, of the people living and born in the United States for generations, that each successive generation has this expectation of opportunity, of the hope that they will be able to have a better life than their parents, and they'll be able to provide something better for their children.

And I would say since the end of the Cold War, that's kind of broken down. And especially since the massive dislocation of the financial crisis of 2008-2009. Angela mentioned that in the Russian context. But this was such a huge blow to the United States and to the generations that have come after us. And now COVID and the pandemic. And we've got other dislocations coming up in the future with climate change, the shifts in the economy, and shifts to artificial intelligence, new technologies to combat climate change. We're going to go to another big period of dislocation, very similar to the one that we had in the seventies and in the 1980s. So, we're going to have to figure out how we manage this.

Biden, I think, understands it because he's lived through all of these historical periods. The Build Back Better bill, the infrastructure bill, no matter how they come out, those were attempts to tackle this. And if the United States can get its act together, can get the collective action to pass some of this to show that the system can deliver for people again, not just materially, but for that opportunity—education has become a massive dividing line in the United States and also including on how you vote or how you process information. A lot of the populist impulses, the conspiracy theories, the disinformation, the Russian interference is being facilitated by a lack of education in the United States going on beyond high school.

So, these are incredibly critical elements for us to address. And that's how they kind of then fit in, if we can get that collective action, we can restore our own internal leadership, but to show to the rest of the world that, hey, we've had a tough time. We've gone through wrenching change, but we can kind of fix this. And it puts ourselves into a better position for, and now I'll hand it over to Angela to, you know, how to deal with Russia and everything else.

STENT: So, I mean, I think we have to recognize that the U.S.-Russian relationship is worse than it's been really since any time since Gorbachev came to power in 1985. There are a whole host of reasons for that. I think personally, it goes back to 2001, when Russia supported the U.S. in the initial phase of the war in Afghanistan. We were working together then. Despite all the Russian rhetoric, you always have to remember the things that the Russians really want to do is to be treated by the United States as an equal. And whatever they say about China or anything else, the U.S. they're still so focused on. And at that point they thought that we were in this alliance, and they likened it to the World War II alliance against Hitler. We had a common enemy and that was terrorism.

Well, Putin then expected a number of things from that, which didn't happen. I think one of the things he expected was that the United States would recognize that Russia had a right to a sphere of influence in the post-Soviet space, and that the U.S. wouldn't try and enlarge NATO, the European Union wouldn't try and extend eastward and all of that. And then Putin has a series of

complaints, of grievances, which he articulates all the time about how the U.S. promised Russia things, or the expectation was that things would change, and they didn't change. And so ever since then, it's really deteriorated and it's gotten much worse since the annexation of Crimea, and the fact that the Russians refuse to admit publicly that they're involved there.

What's really worse today, by the way, is that we have a tiny diplomatic representation. It's never been this bad. I was checking that with some diplomats, former ambassadors, yesterday. So, the Russians have basically said, we can't employ any Russian nationals at our embassy in Moscow or any other, not even non-Russian, but foreign nationals. And so, we're down to a skeleton staff. The Russians still have more people in the United States, but it's fairly impossible to function diplomatically there now because of this. So, we're in a very bad situation.

And of course, all the things that Fiona's been talking about, the things that are happening in this country, make it very difficult for the United States to hold itself up as a kind of a beacon of democratic stability and then lecture to the Russians about what they should do domestically. And you really hear from the Russians and Putin—and this was just again last week, they had the big Valdai Club International Discussion Club meeting, and Putin again reiterated that the United States has absolutely no business talking to Russia about what it should do domestically. If you read the Russian press, if you listen to what the officials are saying, they talk about we're in the stage now where there's a possibility of a war. So, the rhetoric is really quite tough and fiery now. And many Russians, I think, really believe it. They only follow official media. But we really could get into a conflict with Russia.

So, if you had a United States that was able to resolve some of its domestic differences to get legislation passed. The Russians are looking at what's happening now with the infrastructure and the social spending bill. And I remember even Putin talking about this when Obama was trying to get Obamacare through. They look and see, can we even get our own legislation passed? We would have more credibility if we were able to deal with some of these deep divisions in U.S. society. So, let's say that we were, I think we're still at a situation where we have to recognize that

on the one hand, the Russians do want us to treat them as an equal. They do want these stability talks that are going on now—talks on cyber that I already mentioned, talks on climate, anything where we are, Iran, where we can get together with them and we sit down as equals. They want that. On the other hand, they're very wary of the U.S. trying to influence what's happening domestically there, regime change and things like that.

So, I think you have to just work with them on issues where we have common interests and where it's worthwhile expending the energy to do it. And clearly anything to do with nuclear arms control. We are the world's two nuclear superpowers. We really do hold the fate of the rest of the world in our hands in that sense. Anything in that realm. We have to talk to them about cyber because of everything that's happened, including obviously the ransomware attacks that emanate from Russia. And there are a number of issues where we have to talk to them.

But I think we also have to recognize that there are a significant number of issues where we're really not going to be able to get very far with them. They've just broken off the relationship with NATO. Maybe that's just for the good. It wasn't working anyway. We have to be very realistic about that. And at the same time, I think the challenge is not allowing Russia, which is what Putin is trying to do, to cut the Russian people off from the United States, to create a sovereign internet, to not allow exchanges, student exchanges and things like that. We have to still try and be in touch, make contacts with civil society in Russia because people there want it.

But these things are not easy to do. And I think it's going to take a very long time. The big question will be when Putin is no longer in the Kremlin, is there then a window of opportunity? I agree with Fiona that there is an opportunity for change, but even that will have to be handled, I think, in a very kind of diplomatic and sensitive way.

DEWS: Well, as we as we finish up here, Angela and Fiona, I wanted to give each of you an opportunity to take the mic and ask the other a question.

HILL: Well, I'd really like to ask Angela about what she thinks made a critical difference in pushing more women into national security, because, Angela, as I've mentioned at the beginning,

was really a trailblazer for me and a mentor. When I started off at St. Andrews University in Scotland in 1984, there wasn't a single woman professor, that I studied with or that I can even remember. There might have been someone somewhere. But not in either Russian or history fields that I took. I mean, there were Russian language instructors who were women, including when I went to Moscow. And similarly when I got to Harvard, there were women, professors in the government department and a few across the university, but again, not in the history department, not in my field anyway. And so I was always looking for role models, and I was very fortunate to meet Angela along the way. And she was already a professor at Georgetown, and I just always marveled at how she and others really had to persist in pushing forward, and I'm very grateful to her for reaching the hand back to bring along myself and others. But I just kind of wonder if we sort of think forward to the next generations about what you would say, Angela, that really made the difference, apart from preparation, and really a lot of hard work and persistence?

STENT: It's been a very long, slow road. I was for a very long time ... when I was first hired at Georgetown, we had two senior distinguished professors, female professors, in the department, Jeanne Kirkpatrick being the most distinguished. And then there was myself, and nobody else for, I would say, roughly 20 years. So, just in terms of academia itself and political science departments, that was pretty slow.

In the field of Russian studies, there have always been more women. Early on, I was part of an organization called Women in International Security. And in fact, we had a sister organization in Russia, Women in Global Security, and we had a number of very interesting conferences in the 1990s, all-female conferences on ethnic conflict and things like that. So getting together with the numbers and sort of pushing forward what we did was very important.

But I think that didn't have an impact really in the broader sort of think tank, academic world for a long time. I can remember for too many times going to conferences and being the only woman on a panel, or maybe there was one other one there. And it took a long time. I suppose the answer to that is that eventually more and more women were getting into—and I'm not going to

talk about the field of people who study Russia and Eurasia as opposed to political science—but there were more and more people getting into to that and insisting that their voices be heard.

You have to keep up the constant pressure. I mean, in women in international security, we used to write, if we saw there was some major conference going on and there were no women on it or one woman, we would write letters and say, you know, where are the women? And I think people have had to continue to do that.

And then the other thing is, obviously, as a female professor, in my case, encouraging younger women to enter the field and helping to give them opportunities. I mean, a lot of what Fiona's book is about is about opportunities, and I think that was very important, too. But I think you constantly have to have this pressure.

And now there are a number of different organizations that exist. Ones that every time there's a new administration, for instance, when the Biden administration came in, trying to make sure that enough women are appointed to positions. And clearly that's happening in this administration. And then in other fields too, in the military, in national security. And often it's women that have to do this, but men can be their allies, too. Now it's really not possible at most universities to have a "manel," a panel that doesn't have women in it.

And I think all of us still have the experience of sitting in seminars, and I think Fiona describes that in her book, too, where we as women will say something, and then a few minutes later a man will repeat what we said, as if they never listen to the fact that we said it. And, I found as a professor too many times teaching both obviously male and female students that there are a lot of very bright women students who still feel a little bit intimidated about speaking up, whereas the men have been trained to do that. So I think it's just, it has to be the numbers. It has to be constant pressure, but clearly the situation is much better now than it was before.

And I'll end with as I was saying, in association with this Valdai International Discussion Club, I sit on an academic advisory council. And a couple of years ago, the last time we met in person there, they wanted to have a series of scholarships for young leaders. And so I said to them,

Well, I hope you're going to have gender balance there, and you're going to encourage women, too, because there weren't too many at those conference. And they all just looked at me and laughed. So, I think they've got a very long way to go in Russia. We still have a long way to go here, but we're doing pretty well.

So, actually, my question to Fiona is related to that. You have a teenage daughter. You write in your book a lot about the importance of encouraging people and mentorship. What advice are you going to give your own daughter as she looks at her studies and then her professional career about how to advocate for herself and to make sure that she understands how to operate in what is still very much a male dominated world?

HILL: Well, it's very interesting, Angela, that you've asked me that because really, I was sort of listening to you and thinking about that importance of the collective voice. Because obviously, you know, the voice of an individual can resonate at times depending on the platform and the context. But often it's really voices together, not just raised but speaking in harmony, I guess, you know singing in harmony and, it has more, more forth.

I think what I would advise to my daughter is form networks and contacts, and, act in solidarity with others, because everything that I've ever achieved in my life has only been because of the people who have gone before me, and people who have helped me out. And it's all been a team effort. I mean, it's interesting that my daughter plays sports and she actually showed a lot of prowess for individual sports. And we kept pushing her into sort of things like this because she seemed to be good at it. She says, No, I want to play a team sports. And I said why? And she said, I just really enjoy it, I like being with other people. I was pleased by that because, as I said, life is a team sport, and you really can get much more done if you're working with others.

I think the answer that you had to my question, because I did always wonder, obviously knowing about these groups of women in international security and elsewhere, but it is obvious that that's what had the impact. It wasn't just, you know, brilliance and individual professor, because often you get tokenism. And it doesn't matter whether you're a woman, or you're Black, or any

other minority or people with disabilities, you often see the token, you know the person who in a way their exceptionalism proves the rule that it's really hard for their particular group to basically get ahead. It's only by having coalitions across all kinds of different groups, as well as within groups, that you manage to push forward. So that would be the advice that I would give to my daughter. Yeah, playing team sports at school, think about that as you move forward because you can achieve much more as part of a team and peer groups.

And mentor up as well because I've got a lot of advice from my 14-year-old on how to do things, that I'm obviously not missing completely. And I've always been really, kind of appreciated those kind of cross-generational experiences. From my perspective, working with Angela and I worked with Cliff Gaddy for a very long time at Brookings, it's been like a masterclass, learning from them, seeing the different experiences and perspectives. But I also really appreciate working with my younger colleagues at Brookings and at how much I've learned from them and how much they've opened my eyes up to not just new experiences, but new ways of looking at things and a new way of understanding. Because the world changes really rapidly. We ought to pull together to be able to manage it. And that's my advice to my daughter would be, cherish these friendships, these contacts that you've got, and take them forward with, because these are going to be your valuable social networks, real physical networks, not Facebook networks, virtual networks, to help you navigate the world ahead.

DEWS: Well, this has been an utterly fascinating conversation. I've loved every minute of it. Dr. Fiona Hill, Dr. Angela Stent, I want to thank you both for sharing your time and your expertise with us today.

STENT: Thank you.

HILL: Thanks so much, Fred.

STENT: This was fun.

DEWS: You can learn more in their books: “Putin’s World: Russia Against the West and with the Rest.” by Angela Stent, and “There Is Nothing for You Here: Finding Opportunity in the 21st Century,” by Fiona Hill.

A team of amazing colleagues makes the Brookings Cafeteria possible. My thanks go out to audio engineer Gaston Reboredo; our audio intern this semester, Nicolette Kelly; Bill Finan, director of the Brookings Institution Press, who does the book interviews; my communications colleagues Marie Wilkin, Adrianna Pita, and Chris McKenna for their collaboration. And finally, to Ian McAllister, Soren Messner-Zidell and Andrea Risotto for their guidance and support.

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Until next time, I’m Fred Dews.