

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION
WEBINAR

HOW AMERICA CAN GET BIG THINGS DONE:
A CONVERSATION WITH WILL HURD

Washington, D.C.
Monday, April 25, 2022

PARTICIPANTS:

Moderator:

SUZANNE MALONEY
Vice President and Director
Foreign Policy
The Brookings Institution

Panelists:

ROBERT KAGAN
Stephen & Barbara Friedman Senior Fellow
Foreign Policy
The Brookings Institution

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

WILL HURD
Former U.S. Representative and CIA Officer

* * * * *

P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. MALONEY: Good afternoon. I'm Suzanne Maloney, I'm Vice President and Director of the Foreign Policy Program here at the Brookings Institution. And on behalf of Foreign Policy and of all my colleagues here at Brookings, I'm delighted to welcome you to this very special hybrid event where we'll be discussing a range of critical policy issues that former Congressman Will Hurd raises in his recent book, "American Reboot: an Idealist Guide to Getting Big Things Done."

I'm delighted to welcome Will back to the Brookings Institution. We've been so fortunate to engage with Will around several aspects of our policy research over the course of the past several years but this is the first time we've been able to bring him to the Brookings stage in person after several years of virtual events. So thank you, Will, for coming, and thank you all for your patience as we worked out some of our technical issues with our hyper event today.

Will's new book offers a really timely and important analysis and commentary around a range of issues facing the United States and our leadership. The book also puts forward what I believe is a thoughtful and practical strategy to both uphold and implement the American ideals of bipartisanship, inclusivity, and democratic values.

Will lays out a bold political vision for how the United States can tackle major issues facing this country, from maintaining a global presence in the face of renewed great power competition, to managing a global pandemic, to domestic priorities such as adapting new technologies that are rapidly changing the ways that Americans live. This is of course a very tall order. However, the stakes are simply too high for the country to ignore them because of partisanship and a lack of honest political leadership. Fortunately, Will lays out a lot of very sound ideas on how to chart a way forward.

I'm eagerly looking forward to learning from him in what promises to be a

rich and interesting conversation today.

We're grateful to have him with us here on the stage at Brookings. And we're also delighted to be joined by two of our most outstanding colleagues and scholars.

Bob Kagan, who is our Stephen and Barbara Friedman Senior Fellow in the Foreign Policy Studies Program here at Brookings. And Elaine Kamarck, the Founding Director of the Center for Effective Public Management, and Senior Fellow in our Governance Program here at Brookings.

Bob and Elaine are here with us on the screen. They each cover a broad range of domestic and foreign policy issues that are vital to this discourse, and I'm looking forward to their always insightful conversation.

Before we jump into the substance of our discussion here today let me do offer just a brief introduction for our main guest here today. Will Hurd is currently Managing Director of Allen & Company, a former member of Congress, Cybersecurity Executive, and former undercover officer in the Central Intelligence Agency. He served as Representative for Texas' 23rd Congressional District from 2015 to 2021.

As I've just outlined, Will has served his country in many ways. And prior to his role as Congressman he served for nine years in the CIA, including overseas assignments. Will is a native of San Antonio, and earned a Computer Science Degree from Texas A&M University. Additionally, he's a Trustee of the German Marshall Fund, a Board Member of the OpenAI Initiative, and he most recently served as a Fellow at the University of Chicago's Institute of Politics.

Will, congratulations on this very important new book, and we're all looking forward to hearing from you.

To those of you in the audience, let me encourage you to join our conversation here today by offering your questions or comments via Twitter using the

#Americanreboot, or by sending any questions or comments to Events@Brookings.edu.

Will, I want to start off just with the title of your book. You really address just a full range of issues but what you're calling for here is a reboot of our politics. Tell me why and tell me how that gets done.

MR. HURD: Well when I went to Texas A&M University I studied computer science. And my first job in college was working at a computer lab. And when the computer was doing something I didn't know how to fix, what did I do? I rebooted it, I hit reset. And I'm talking about getting back to a fresh operating system that has been helpful in the past, that has helped us grow a country over 245 years that has ultimately been the envy of the world.

And that's why I titled it, that it's not titled about making major changes or throwing out an old way of doing things. And it's important because, as you alluded to, 72 percent of Americans think the country's on the wrong track. This is a growing feeling that has been growing over years. We don't have to accept the current trajectory that we're on.

And ultimately for me, this is more about making sure the American economy stays the most important economy in the world and that we continue this trajectory that we started over 247 years ago. And that's why I wrote it, and I tried to leverage my experiences, whether it was in technology, being associated with the national security community for more than two decades, or having experiences in multi country organizations and businesses. And so it's important because I want to make sure we leave this country better off, you know, to our kids and our grandkids.

MS. MALONEY: And how would we go about this reboot? You know we all recognize there's a lot of frustration around domestic issues as well as foreign policy issues but I think there's this challenge of, you know, the political system seems sclerotic, and it seems very, very difficult to effect change, something that you must recognize from your

time on the Hill.

MR. HURD: Look, it starts with, so there's five generational defining challenges, in my opinion, that we're dealing with. One, it starts with GOP needs to start looking more like America. And not just Republicans should care about this, Democrats should care, Independents should care. Because we need two strong parties to have a competition of ideas.

And so I outline different ways that the GOP can achieve that. It's actually our opportunity. We also need national leaders that are willing to inspire and not fear monger. A lot of that is driven because the system is designed to talk to the edges and the extremes rather than the middle.

I do a deep dive into some of the numbers. If you look at in 2020 there were only 34 House seats that were competitive. And my definition of competitive is in the last Presidential election one party, you know, the district voted for one party for President and the other party for Congress. That means 92 percent of House seats were decided in the primary. And in the last non-presidential election in 2018, the average number of people that voted in a contested primary was 54,000 people. So 26,501 people are deciding 92 percent of our seats.

Now why is that the case? The professional political class has talked to likely primary voters. And what I'm advocating is is hard, don't get me wrong. I recognize how difficult this task is. We need more people voting in the primaries. If I had a magic wand would I design systems differently? Absolutely. But I don't have a magic wand and I know this is possible because this is how I won.

I'm a black Republican that represented a 71 percent Latino District. Nobody thought I had a chance to win. And then when I won everybody thought it was a fluke and everybody would herald my demise. Right? And the reason I was able to win is

because not only did I get Independents and Democrats to vote for me in the general election, I got new voters to vote in the primary. It's hard.

But it's just something we have to do if we're going to be able to have this discourse as necessary to be able to talk about technology's role in society, what is the role of America in the rest of the world? These sound like simple questions to answer but they're hard and they actually require some debate. And that's what we're going to be able to do to make sure the country continues to evolve.

MS. MALONEY: I want to bring Elaine in in just a minute, particularly around some of the ideas that you have and how we might actually get more people voting in the primaries, what other kind of reforms to the system that might be necessary.

But I want to come back to something you talk about in the book first which was, you know, your listening tours, you described it I think as D.C. to DQ. And as someone whose very first job was at a Dairy Queen before I graduated to a Friendly's, I found this, you know, really interesting that you spent every summer doing kind of whistle stop tours in town halls to meet all of your constituents.

And what were the sort of things that you were hearing about when you actually talked to regular people?

MR. HURD: So my district was 29 Counties, two time zones, 820 miles of the border. It took 10 and a half hours to drive from one corner of the district to the other at 80 miles an hour, which was the speed limit in most of the district. I found out the hard way it's not the speed limit in all of the district. And so regardless of whether I was in, it's roughly the size of the State of Georgia.

Whether I was in a deep blue town like El Paso, or a ruby red county like Medina County, people ask and have the exact same issues. And guess what, I said the exact same things in all those places. And the questions people asked was in essence

around being able to put food on the table, a roof over their head, and making sure the people they love being healthy, happy, and safe. And so those were the issues I talked about.

And what was always fascinating to me is when I would do these trips a lot of the national media saw my whole district as a bell weather of the country. And so people, you know, these reporters would always come with me when I did these D.C. to DQ. And so in essence I did 37 town halls in five days.

And what would happen, I told these reporters, look, I'm going to do my thing and then I'm going to give you 10 minutes at the end to ask and do whatever you want to do. And all the time these reporters would be like, y'all didn't ask this question or you didn't ask about this, or how come nobody cares about this? And the reporters were shocked that the things that were trending on Twitter, were being talked about in cable news, were not the questions that constituents would ask me.

And so it starts with showing up at places you've never been so you can understand what those problems were and then addressing those issues. And the thing that I learned, way more unites us than divides us. And it may not feel that way because we are probably in a moment where we are some of the most hyper partisan we've ever been in. But when it comes to voters, when it comes to people, they actually want to believe in something larger than themselves and they want to see real leaderships. And so those are what the D.C. to DQs taught me.

MS. MALONEY: Elaine, I wonder if we could bring you into the conversation at this point and get your views both on, you know, how we might think about bringing more voters to the early stages of political competition in this country in order to create a more responsive and conceivably more centrist kind of governance from both parties.

But also about what you're seeing in terms of the kind of incentive structure for politicians from both political parties, Republicans and Democrats, who often are I think responding to what they see or they read on Twitter.

MS. KAMARCK: Well thank you, Suzanne, and thank you Congressman Hurd, wonderful to have you here.

Look, what's been happening for some time, and I think it's beginning to change, is that the center of action in American politics is not November, it is not November. The most important things that happen in political and party politics in American politics today happen in the primaries.

Because it is in the primaries where we get what Will Hurd refers to in his book as the edges. The edges that dominate. So we have the sort of the colloquial way to say it is the tail wags the dog here. All right.

So in the Republican Party you have very deep red districts where the Republican is certainly going to win, and the only place that the Republicans can lose to say an incumbent, is in a primary. And in that primary, because turnout is so low, a concentrated and passionate minority can define the race. So what you get is you get incumbent members of Congress who perhaps have an inclination, as Will did, to look for the common good and move to the center. You find them scared away by a vehement right wing that is going to punish them in a primary and they can lose in a primary.

Same thing happens on the Democratic left, okay? You have places like Cambridge, Massachusetts and Ann Arbor, Michigan and Berkeley, California, where the political spectrum runs from a sort of centrist Democrat all the way over to Democrat of Socialist and Trotskyites. Okay. So it's a bizarre setup wherein each party the tail wags the dog.

Now I agree with Will, in the near future there's not much to be done about

this, although I have an outlier's view on this, I think returning the nomination process to political parties is actually something we ought to think about. But that's not going to happen for a long time.

In the meantime the only thing we can do is through good government groups, emphasize the importance of voting in primaries. I would so much rather have the turnout jump in primaries than even jump in the general election. And if we can get more people participating in primaries I think that we will have an ability to mute the impact of the edges on the two political parties. Which right now are being governed, each of them is being governed by a minority.

So here we are in this bizarre situation where we with a majoritarian political system, we have minorities running our political system. I can't hear.

MR. HURD: I'll keep going and then we'll --

MS. MALONEY: I got it.

MR. HURD: Okay, here we go, we're back on. So if I had a magic wand I would design no district more than plus six in either direction. So 56 percent Republican or 56 percent Democrat. That forces competition. To me a plus six in either direction is a jump ball and anybody can win and so that creates competition in November.

And this is not about creating compromise, this is about creating people that get rewarded for solving problems. And so if you get elected in November then you have to be someone that knows how to solve problems. If you get elected in that primary season Elaine is talking about, you become a bomb thrower because you're talking to that extreme, and in some cases 2 to 3 percent of the electorate.

So what do we have to do now? And I think these good government groups that are talking about reforms, to how making it easier though. We should make it as easy to vote as possible. We should have same-day registration, we should be able to register

online. Like let's make it easy. Texas has two weeks of early voting, we can vote on the weekends. Let's make it easier.

But in the meantime we need more people voting in those primaries. And a 3,000 to 4,000 person change in a congressional district is a tectonic shift, that's almost 10 percent of a winning coalition, and that can change the outcome.

And what we're talking about, number one, is hard. The professional political class is not geared towards that. The professional political class is geared towards, you know, talking to four, four voters. Meaning somebody who's voted in four of the last four Republican primary or Democratic primary. That's who most campaigns talk to. And if those are the only people you talk to, then we're going to get the results we've always had.

And I've told this story before, when I was, my first year in Congress I spoke at the South by Southwest, this conference in Austin. And a bunch of You Tube stars, the other four people combined had 1 billion subscribers on You Tube. I had 60. Twenty of them are probably on right now, right? Like 60. And the digital director for the Rock was on, this is when the movie Moana was coming out. And she said if Moana fails at the box office are we going to blame the consumer, the movie goes, or are we going to blame the products, the movie. And she's like obviously if it fails we're going to blame the movie.

Now I thought Moana was a delightful movie, it had a lot of box office success. She added, it's only in politics that we blame the consumer, the voters, versus the product, the politicians.

We just had an election in Texas, only 3 million people voted, Republican and Democrat, out of 30 million. Part of that is because everybody else is not interested in what other side, what either side is cooking. And so that's where the opportunity is, to be able to drag in and bring in more people to that primary. And I agree, if we got more people voting in the primaries we're going to be a lot better off.

MS. MALONEY: It all sounds really laudable and common sense, right? We should be doing these things, we should be making it more attractive for people to be able to get out and vote, we should be encouraging people who are focused on solving problems rather than on throwing bombs to get into politics. But, you know, you've been there and you know what a toll it takes and how difficult it is to get things done.

How do you actually overcome the structural obstacles that exist in the system as we've constructed it? Now I'll open this up to all of you, although I want to bring Bob in in just a moment, especially on the foreign policy issues.

MR. HURD: The way you do it is to require candidates that have the resources, to get a different message out. Period. Full stop. It's hard, it's hard. Look, I know it's possible because I was able to do it. And so this is the model, the cost of getting a person who votes in the general election but doesn't vote in the primary, of getting that voter to move, is probably three or four times more expensive to get that voter to do something than it is a reliable primary voter. But we're going to need to be able to do it.

Most of the people watching this are probably primary voters. Okay? But have you gotten your family to go out and vote, have you gotten your friends to go out? Just get them to participate in the primary process, right? And that's the step. Voting in a general election is the floor of civic activity, it's not the ceiling.

And so it's hard, it's effort, but democracy is fragile and if we want to make sure that we see this continue to exist then we gotta do it.

MS. MALONEY: Elaine, I see you eager to get into this conversation.

MS. KAMARCK: Yeah. No, I have one final thought on this, Will, and it's, you know the primary process is set up state by state. Which means that the primaries begin in March in Texas, as you know, but they go all the way to September in Massachusetts, where I am right now, okay? And then they're spread all the way across the

summer, through there's a lot of primaries in June when people are having graduations and weddings.

The system, because it evolves state by state, as opposed to a national system, is almost guaranteed to make people forget that there's a primary election happening. Whereas the reason we have such high turnout in November is of course it's one day and the interest and momentum builds at a crescendo. It is very, very hard to get that to happen.

Now legislation to introduce a national primary, as you well know I'm sure, Will, has been introduced literally almost 100 times and failed every single time. So that's kind of a nonstarter. However, it seems to me that if we can push this message that you're pushing, that the primary is where it's happening, that's what matters. And if we can get good government groups, League of Women Voters, people like that who are non-partisan saying vote in your primary, that is what's decisive. I think we can actually increase primary turnout.

And I have a little indication of that, a little hopeful indication from some research we're currently engaged in here at Brookings. For the fourth time in a row we have coded every single congressional candidate in the country in both parties. And we have coded them on a variety of issues, but also on where they stand fractionally within their parties. And to my surprise both on the left and on the right the sort of edges, the wings that you talked about, they're more muted than I thought they would be.

There are people who say America first, but they don't put Trump on their website, you know, they don't talk about Trump. They say we ought to build a wall, but it's kind of more muted. There are people who clearly talk about Medicare for all and some of the touchstones for the Democratic progressive way, but they're not advertising it in an AOC endorsement or, the sole exception, by the way, being your home state of Texas in the race

between Cisneros and Cuellar.

But other than that, the edges are surprisingly missing. And I don't know what, I don't know what that's about. Maybe primary turnout is increasing, or maybe people are worried that if they go too far left or right in the primary it could hurt them in the general. I don't know what this phenomenon is about and I will caution that we're only about a quarter of the way through the almost 2000 congressional candidates so this may change.

But this has got to be the message of good government groups and of the political parties, which is you must participate in the primaries. If you don't you are missing more than half the story in modern American politics.

MR. HURD: And I think, and I'll just add on that, you have recent examples of when you talk about issues, people opinions change. And let's take Ukraine as the example. When Putin first invaded the second time, I was pretty aggressive on that day. I thought America should be giving as much heavy weapons as we possibly could, we should be doing this concept of a humanitarian no-fly zone, I don't think we need boots on the ground. But I was out there. And some of my old staff called me and was like, hey, boss, you know, you're pretty far out there, the country's not there, be careful. I was like no, this is what I believe, this is what I think needs to happen. And then after we started seeing and learning more about what was really going on, a lot of the country moved on this.

And so when you're able to talk to people about things, they see things that they care about, they start wondering about why has this happened, you'll see a change in a movement and a shift in people. So we have a recent example of how that applies.

MS. MALONEY: Well, Will, you've just nicely helped us pivot to bring in issues of foreign policy, which consume a lot of your book. Obviously it's been a major part of your own career, both in Congress and before Congress.

And so I just wanted to get your sense, you lay out what seems like a very

common-sense strategy here as well, be nice to nice guys, be tough with tough guys. Fight the wars of the future, not the wars of the past. Why, if it seems so simple, why do we seem to have such difficulty in achieving our aims, especially over the course of the past couple decades?

MR. HURD: Well it starts with sometimes we forget who our friends are and who our enemies are. I hope no future president tries to restart relationships with Vladimir Putin, it ain't gonna happen, right? So I could criticize every administration back to George W. Bush about getting our allies, you know, who our friends were and who our enemies were. So it starts by being clear on that.

I think America has been more isolationist, has been isolationist more than it has been, you know, not. And it wasn't until after the end of World War II where I think America became a global superpower because we offered a helping hand to Europe and helped rebuild Europe, and led to 72 years of peace and prosperity and a trading partner that allowed us and them to become half a global GDP.

So the issue is, the two parties, the edges of both parties, I don't think the political spectrum is alive anymore, it's a horseshoe. And the edges are closer to each other than they are to the center. And in both of those edges you have this isolationist lean, and part of that is pulling away.

As frustrating as some of these international organizations are we can't just take our ball and go home. We've gotta show leadership in them and to make sure these organizations are doing the things that they were designed to do. And that is having an international order that has actually led to us being the most important economy in the world and uplifting humanity. And so that is where we should be able to be going.

MS. MALONEY: Well you I think really pivoted nicely to Bob Kagan as well, who is here with us, and he's just finishing the latest volume of his Dangerous Nation series.

And he's written a lot about these various issues of how America has shed its isolationist tendencies and engaged more thoroughly in the world.

So, Bob, I wonder what you think about the prospects for a more coherent and effective foreign policy, and whether you think there's a bipartisan element of that. Can we come together away from the edges of the horseshoe but around a kind of core conception of American national interest in the world?

MR. KAGAN: Well it's an excellent question, and to have Will here. Congratulations on the book.

You know, American foreign policy has sort of stands apart in a way when you think about bipartisanship and political issues. Now on the one hand it's a myth to think that there was a bipartisanship in foreign policy. Sometimes one of the parties feels so sort of vulnerable on foreign policy that they're forced to agree with the other party, which is what happened during the Cold War where I think the Democrats felt under constant pressure to look like they were as tough on Communism as the Republicans were, insisting they weren't, and that creates a bipartisan view.

But mostly including from the days of Hamilton and Jefferson, foreign policy, as every other issue in American politics, is an issue in American politics, and it's very hard to get away from that.

And as far as coherence and consistency, I would say those are not normally American foreign policy hallmarks. But sometimes we get it right almost despite ourselves.

So, and I get, you know, what Congressman Hurd says about Ukraine. I have been very encouraged by the degree to which Americans, and by Americans I mean the great majority in both parties, have responded to Ukraine without, in a way, getting direction from their party leaders. In fact if you get the, you know, what you've been

referring to as the fringe on the right on foreign policy, they've been pretty much routed by the Republican Majority which agrees with the Democratic Majority on Ukraine. So even Donald Trump had to sort of reverse him from his pro-Putin, or at least begin to reverse himself from his pro-Putin stance. So all that can happen.

And therefore I think it's promising going forward, to see it again. You know, American foreign policy has been a constant oscillation between periods of high intervention and involvement in the world and periods of retrenchment and retreat. And I think those two things are related. We sort of get more involved than we wish we were and then we want to pull back and so we go up and down. And the question is always how do you know when you've reached the trough and are on your way back up to involvement. And I do feel like Ukraine may signal that turn finally, away from sort of trough of I don't use isolationism just because it's so pejorative, but the general is anti-intervention, anti-involvement view that's in both parties and we've seen the American public response to it.

So I think that's great. And it's really important for people like you, Will, that you are making that case because at times that's the hardest case to make in American politics is why does anything that happens out there, matter to us, you know. Because we're a big, rich country with oceans on two sides and we can get by for a long time even as the world falls apart.

So getting Americans to care about what's going on in the world I think is really important, and I congratulate you on that. I am not, I must say I have some questions on the domestic front and I don't want to impose my ignorant views on domestic politics on this conversation when we're got such experts here.

But I did have one question, Will, if you don't mind my asking. And you probably go into in *American Reboot* and I didn't read, I haven't read it carefully enough to find it yet. But my question is, why did you not run in 2020?

MR. HURD: Sure. I didn't run in 2020, and also add on to his ending on foreign policy. I don't think these jobs were designed to be in forever. In 2009 when I first ran and I lost the runoff by 700 votes because I made a tactical and strategic error, and I better not tell that story anymore.

I said to do these jobs right you have a shelf life of six, seven, or eight years. And so when I decided to not run for reelection, it was, you know, it was within that vein. People always criticize me because I said I was against term limits. But I also say you don't have to die or be defeated to leave Congress. You can actually leave on your own terms. And so that's why I did that.

I also think part of the reason there's been like this ossification of how things get done is because people have been here too long. I got 21 pieces of legislation signed into law in six years. That's a lot. Some people that have been there for 20 years don't do that kind of legislation. And so for me it was the right time, right? It was, and then the opportunity, because I do believe this question about whether this century is going to say the American Century, is going to get defined around technology. Whoever is able to be the global leader in a number of technologies is going to, this is going to be the rest of their century.

And so to be able to have the opportunity to work with some cutting-edge technology. I thought I understood technology when I was in Congress, I did a lot of work on it, but I realize, man, it's moving so fast, it's moving so quick. The next 47 years is going to make the last 47 years since the use of the personal computer look like we've been monkeys playing in the dirt with sticks, right?

And so to be able to be involved in that is one of the reasons. And so I would have won, again. Probably would have been my largest margin, my replacement showed that was the case. So it was the right time to get out and walk away.

But to your point, foreign policy is not foreign. And those of us that care about this issue have to continue to explain and make the case why that is. Why do I think the public understands a little more right now? Because they're feeling the impact of the costs when you pump, you know, filling up your car or buying food in the grocery store.

They're also seeing in places like South and West Texas, dealing with the immigration crisis that we're dealing with. So we're seeing examples of how this is having an impact. And for me, you know, addressing some of those root causes, a lot of things we gotta do on immigration. One of them is addressing root causes in some of the countries that are sending people back. So you can make the case of why foreign aid matters, and it's a fraction of the cost to solve the problem before it gets to our shores.

So we have to make that case of why it matters, and sometimes we've fallen down. But I will give a, here's where I think foreign policy, you can get closer, people working together in other areas. It's the one issue where members of Congress still travel together and learn together.

You go on these Congressional delegations to meet with foreign heads of state, you're spending time together, you're having shared experiences, you're having these debates and conversations over meals and playing cards on the plane. And so it creates a level of engagement that you don't have on other issues.

And so that's why there's been a number of times, and Ukraine's an example, where Republicans and Democrats in the House and the Senate work together in opposition of the President at the time. That happened in '15, and then obviously, what was it, 2018. And so I think that this is one of those issues where it could potentially see people trying to solve problems.

MS. MALONEY: Let me use this to bring in a comment that we had from a couple members of our audience which referenced some of the remarks you've made

recently about the need for a Marshall Plan for Ukraine. And that's something that we here at Brookings have actually been doing some thinking about and hope to be launching a major project around.

But I wanted to actually get all of our panelists, starting with you, Will, but Bob and Elaine as well. How salient is that kind of an issue to voters? It's going to be complicated, it's going to be expensive, it's going to require us not just to put, you know, taxpayer dollars on the line but also engage with all kinds of multilateral acronym bureaucracies around the world. And ultimately, like Afghanistan, like so many other issues, it will be somewhat remote to the average American.

How do we make the case that this is important today just as the Marshall Plan was important after the War?

MR. HURD: So it starts with keeping Zelensky alive, right? As long as President Zelensky is able to stay alive, his ability to not only inspire his own people in Europe and the rest of the world, it starts with having that kind of leadership that's inspiring.

The reason you need a Marshall Plan now, our Eastern European friends are going to continue, the longer this conflict goes on, the more pressures they're going to see. They're going to be dealing with populations that live under the threat of war. The closer you are to Russia the more sanctions and secondary sanctions have an impact to you. And three, you have a growing humanitarian crisis from Ukrainians leaving the Ukraine, also Belarusians.

Warsaw, last month, increased 14 percent in one month, the population, all right. That's insane. So those three things are going to be adding on to the existing pressures. Oh, and by the way, you have potential global financial issues on top of all of this. So these governments are going to feel some pressure.

And they're going to feel pressure to be like why can't the Ukrainians just

settle with the Russians. And you're going to see more tensions within the Western Alliance, which you're starting to see already. And ultimately Vladimir Putin wins.

So when you think about a rebuild of Ukraine, the rebuild of Ukraine, again, in Poland, Slovakia, my friends in Moldova, right? Like this begins by helping and providing resources to those humanitarian crisis coming over from Ukraine about Russia. And then when a conflict ends, then you can push forward to reestablish their ability in those countries.

It's hard, it is complicated, but just like when George C. Marshall started the Marshall Plan after World War II, he made the case to the American public of why solving the problem there is important for us, right? And it starts with that.

MS. MALONEY: Bob and Elaine, do you want to comment on why solving the problem and helping to both defeat Vladimir Putin in Ukraine and eventually look toward the rebuilding of Ukraine is going to be important, and can it actually resonate with voters today?

MR. KAGAN: Well I'll defer to the political experts here on what the voters are going to think. I will say that the Marshall Plan was passed by a great deal of, I won't say fearmongering, but certainly fear firing, you know, it was possible to get Americans very worked up about the threat of Communism.

The question is do they feel the same way about, you know, aggression in a part of the world that most couldn't find on a map. Do they perceive, do Americans perceive the threat of Putin, and maybe the combined threat of the two great power authoritarians, Russia and China? Do they perceive that in the same way that they perceived international Communism?

Because of course they tremendous, I would say Americans exaggerated the threat of Communism, their number one fear was that we would have a Communist

Revolution in the United States after all. And so that's always been the question. Can you replicate, what we accomplished in those seven decades did rest very much on a pervasive fear of Communism. And the hardest thing to do, and I'm sure you've been doing it, Will, and I've been trying to do it for a couple of decades now, is to say these threats posed by Russia and China are as great, if not greater, than the threat posed by the Soviet Union, which was pretty much overstretched from the moment it was created.

But and yet it's been very difficult to get Americans to care enough to do anything that was potentially costly. And the question therefore I would have, both for Elaine and for you, is do you really think the American people are ready to be, when you talk about a Marshall Plan, you better have a very broad and deep consensus in the country, otherwise that in itself can become a very controversial project.

So the question is do Americans really have the same sense of concern and anxiety that they had during the Cold War.

MS. KAMARCK: Yeah, let me take off from where Bob left off. And I know a little bit about the history of the Marshall Plan in domestic politics.

When the Second World War ended, there was great concern about what was going to happen to the American economy, which had been mobilized to produce planes, trains, trucks, socks for soldiers, guns, etcetera. So that demobilization and the return of, you know, hundreds of thousands of fighting men, mostly, some women, caused the entire political class to worry about what was going to happen.

And so when the Marshall Plan was proposed, it had behind it the business community, which needed Europe to become a market again. Because if you remember, way back then in the late 40s and the 50s, China, Asia, I mean that whole part of the world was really not part of a global economy. We traded with Europe, that's where we traded.

So business was worried about the devastation of Europe, labor was terribly

worried about all the jobs. They needed to put men to work producing new things, okay, now that they weren't building airplanes anymore. And to that, so you had a big, big coalition of labor and business saying we gotta rebuild Europe, no matter what it costs, and it'll come back to us.

You then had, as Bob mentioned, you had an anti-Communist movement that was joined by religious leaders, particularly the Catholics, like Father, I've forgotten his name right now, but religious leaders who were, you know, adamantly against Communism because they were so anti-religious. And you had the emergence of an internationalist segment of both the Democratic and the Republican Party.

So the Marshall Plan domestically was the culmination of a perfect storm of interests coming together. And people who never agreed before the Marshall Plan, and never agreed with each other after the Marshall Plan, came together because it was the answer to a whole variety of questions, whether they were hardnosed economic questions or they were aspirational questions about freedom of religion in countries.

I frankly, right now I think we need to talk about this very closely because I'm not sure that Ukraine, as much as it is important, is big enough in our own interests to sustain American public opinion support for a long period of time and for a big amount of money.

And let me just finally say the Marshall Plan was a significant portion of GDP. It was a ton of money. And I don't think that anything we could or should put together for the rebuilding of Ukraine will approximate as a portion of GDP what the Marshall Plan was.

MR. HURD: Because we're not talking about something that needs to be as large as a percentage of GDP as the Marshall Plan was in the 50s, and so what that dollar amount is, I don't know what the answer is.

But the broader framework where we need to get to is how do we create a national economic security plan that ultimately addresses the Belt and Road Initiative of the Chinese government? And so that is something that is a much larger issue that we have to address. I think Ukraine is one small piece of this. I can say that the Northern Triangle of Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras around immigration is another piece of this broader economic national security plan.

And we need to be start doing things where we're thinking more than just one-year budgets or two-year budgets. We need to be thinking about how to we appropriate and use money 10 years in advance to create that consistency of solving some of these problems.

Because when you look at what the Belt and Road Initiative the Chinese government has done, the number of countries that they're in, it's staggering. The amount of money that they're putting in is staggering. And this is one area, I think there's two areas in Congress where there is bipartisan agreement on.

The threat of the Chinese government and the threat of technology. Let's just call it a vague kind of technology, I might even say cybersecurity. And so looking at, yes, this is a strategy on how to deal with an ally, post-Russian invasion, supporting the Eastern Part of the Western Alliance as part of a larger initiative to ensure that the United States and our allies are able to compete with China.

Because the difference between this new Cold War with the Chinese government and the Cold War with the Russians or the Soviet Union, the Soviet economy was nowhere near the size of the American economy. The population, nowhere near the size. And it's the exact opposite when it comes to the Chinese government. And so I think this is an interim step where now people are focusing on this because they're seeing the impact, and they're also seeing the death and destruction that's happening and saying that

should not be allowed to happen.

MS. MALONEY: I think you bring up really important points here, the role of technology, the kind of systematic competition that we find ourselves in between the West as a kind of concept rather than as a geographic place and the rise of these authoritarian powers and what they're able to do in other relationships around the world.

I want to make sure before as we're coming to the end of our time together, to bring us more questions from the audience, and so my colleague, Adrianna, is going to give us one that has come over either the email or the Twitter feed over the course of our conversation.

ADRIANNA: Yeah, we got a couple questions that came in over email. I'm going to, if I squeak into two of them I'm going to combine a couple things. There was several that were more along Elaine's line about what makes these Congressional Districts so uncompetitive and what can be done to better them. How much of that is due to gerrymandering.

And a lot of questions were about ranked-choice voting, if that would help make those districts more competitive, help even that out.

And then the other question for Congressman Hurd is about the future of the Republican Party. Sort of what path forward is there for the party when, I'm going to quote here "How the party can reinvent itself as a party of thoughtful, responsible opposition when it's thoughtful and responsible members, such as yourself and Justin Amash, are increasingly deciding to distance themselves or to not seek reelection.

MS. KAMARCK: Okay. Well I'll start with the two about voting. Obviously if we crackdown on gerrymandering somehow we would make more competitive districts, there's no doubt about it. However, we need to be aware of the fact that that only will go so far. There's sort of a ceiling to how many districts we can compete because there's another

thing going on.

In the last several decades Americans have sorted themselves out by themselves, right? They can move to be near people like them, and the politics sort of follows from there. So there are places, there are places in the country where it would be really, really hard to build a competitive district without doing some totally bizarre gerrymandering. Okay?

So there's a role for stopping gerrymandering, it's not clear if anybody can do it because the courts in fact have been very shy of getting in the middle of this, particularly the Supreme Court. And there is just a limit because of the way Americans choose to live near people like themselves. And so there is some limit to that, which is too bad.

Ranked-choice voting in primaries, in fact, could help this situation a great deal, okay? Because it would allow primary voters to vote their head and their heart at the same time. You could say, oh, the person I really like is that person who talks about the green new deal. Yeah, but they may not win so I'll vote them first and then I'll vote the more traditional Democrat second. And so that may in fact be one of the answers to primaries. I don't think it's a particular answer to the general, but I think it could be there as well.

So I think ranked-choice voting, and I think there's a future for that and I think it's an interesting new facet of our election campaigns.

MR. HURD: I second on that. As a person whose run for office, it's hard for me to get my head around how do you run a campaign for coming in second, right? And I think that is what, you know, trying to understand, you know, how does this play out?

I didn't realize, I think in the Virginia elections in the primaries ranked-choice voting was used, that's how Glenn Youngkin came out of the primaries, someone informed me of that. So I think that with open primaries I think there's a whole lot of issues there. But

what principle are we using to design districts? I think the overriding principle should be creating competition in November.

So over a geographic, you know, design that we can understand or making sure an entire neighborhood is together. I think creating competition in November is the way we would do these designs. But right now the only option, get more people voting in primaries.

What's the future of the GOP? The future of the GOP is this. We have an opportunity. And I'm not trying to be political here, but most prognosticators have said the House is going to get taken back by Republicans and we're likely to take back the Senate. And this is not because the American public is in love with our ideas, it's because they really don't like the other sides or what they're trying to do. And so we have to recognize that that is the reality of what's going to happen in '22 and can we grow the party into new coalitions that we haven't done? In the last 30 years I think both parties just try to squeak out a little bit more in their existing coalitions rather than trying to grow new coalitions and build that tent, for the lack of a better word.

That's the opportunity. And it starts with conservatives. We may believe that we have better ideas, but if people don't like us, they're not going to listen to those ideas. And so being able to appeal to people say, hey, you know, they trust you and they're going to be able to listen to your ideas, that's the opportunity that the GOP has. And look, the parties are much larger than just the people that are in Congress representing those parties. And so it takes a lot of people to try to reform this.

People always ask me, why don't you switch parties? No, I'm not going to switch parties because I believe that freedom leads to opportunity, opportunity leads to growth, growth leads to progress. I want to stay and fight and make sure that we have a GOP that's more reflective of where I think the majority of Americans are.

MS. MALONEY: Well, Will, that seems like an absolutely perfect note on which to end.

This has been a fantastic conversation. My tremendous thanks to Bob Kagan and Elaine Kamarck for sharing their wisdom with us here today, to all of you for tuning in, and I strongly encourage the book *American Reboot: An Idealists Guide to Getting Big Things Done*. I hope that we can continue to get big things done together.

Thanks so much, Will.

MR. HURD: Thank you.

* * * * *

CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

Carleton J. Anderson, III

(Signature and Seal on File)

Notary Public in and for the Commonwealth of Virginia

Commission No. 351998

Expires: November 30, 2024

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
1800 Diagonal Road, Suite 600
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190