

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

WEBINAR

DIVIDED WE FALL: WHY CONSENSUS MATTERS

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**PARTICIPANTS:**

**Opening Remarks:**

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**A Conversation With The Rivlins:**

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**Is there hope or are we doomed?**

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## P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. LIU: Good afternoon. I want to ask everyone to take their seats please. Good afternoon. I'm Amy Liu and I am the interim president of Brookings. And I would like to welcome all of you to today's event to celebrate a new book, "Divided We Fall: Why Consensus Matters."

This was a book as written by Alice Rivlin in her final days. And it was penned with incredible clarity, passion, and urgency. And it was then completed by her son and daughter-in-law, Allan and Sheri Rivlin who took on their task with equal thoughtfulness and sense of public duty. So Allan and Sheri, I want to thank you for your hard work and for being with us here today.

And for all of you, it is a true delight to be joined in person and virtually by many friends and family members of Alice's as well as former colleagues of Alice's from government and from Brookings and many other organizations where she had a real impact over her lifetime.

Now, we gather today not just to celebrate Alice's service to our country. But to heed her final call to all of us to consider, "how to make our government work better" because frankly, it has not worked for most Americans, for most communities and for the American experiment which has been the standard bearer for the world.

So let me start by talking about Alice. It is hard to find someone who never ran for office and yet still managed to touch and influence public policy in more ways than Alice did. Her service began in what was then called the Department of Health and Education Welfare in the Lyndon Baines Johnson administration. It later included, just to name a few positions, being the founding director of the Congressional Budget Office, the director of the Office of Management and Budget and vice chair of the Federal Reserve Board.

Before and in between her stints in government, Alice found a home at Brookings, beginning in 1957 and ending with her passing in 2019. Alice embodied the best of Brookings. She was thoughtful. She was wide ranging. She was evidence based in her research with significant impact on identifying economic policies and fiscally responsible approaches that impact broad based prosperity.

And following the 2016 presidential election, Alice was a collegial force. She worked

across research teams to try and galvanize ways in which Brookings could better respond to the needs of the people and the places left behind. And it was clear their disconnect and their discontent shaped the politics that we know today.

It is with that vantage point that I want to mention my own appreciation of Alice's leadership and how her collaboration with a team at Brookings Metro informed some of her recommendations in the new book. Now, as some of you know prior to serving in this role, I was cofounder of Brookings Metro and most recently its vice president. And the program is dedicated to prosperous, just and resilience cities and communities.

Now, in our early founding -- I don't know if you all know this, but Alice occupied the Johnson chair in urban and metropolitan policy. And she did that following her stint as chair of the D.C. Financial Control Board. And by the way, Bell Sawhill was the first occupant of the Johnson chair. And it was from that role at Brookings Metro that Alice dedicated her passion to the future of her home city and her region.

Her research, her convening efforts helped informed the launch of a network of community health centers. She created a community college program for D.C. residents and envisioning a future capitol city that was dynamic and inclusive with the goal of attracting 100,000 more residents in 10 years to this city. An idea that was unheard of at the time out of a financial crisis from that city.

More than 10 years later her vision was realized. D.C. now is a growing city of more than 670,000 residents. Although, of course, it has its new set of challenges now around inequality. But this is Alice. Alice worked passionately on functioning governance in federal Washington, and she listened to and met the needs of community and residents in local Washington. She cared about the residents who had long been locked out of opportunity.

And in her book, Alice draws from this experience. She worries about horizontal inequality in which too much opportunity is concentrated in too few places especially in the American heartland. And at the same time, she drew optimism that change is possible especially when policymakers enable local and state leaders to solve their economic challenges together.

If Alice was with us today, I think she'd be pleased that Congress passed and the president signed several historic bipartisan bills recently. The CHIPS and Science Act and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. Two bills focused on the economy and opportunity. Two bills that usher in a new era of place-based regional economic development policy. These were things that were on her wish list.

For all that progress, the dangers to our democracy remains real and imminent. Surely, you are going to hear from our speakers. You're going to get a program that is not just going to be a seminar on polarization and the need for bipartisanship. Actually, we're going to get as you're going to get Alice's message.

Alice left us an urgent message for the American public and its leaders to respond to the tragic moment we share together. While we celebrate Alice's life and achievements and the publication of this important book, she leaves her legacy in our hands. It is incumbent upon all of us to do our part to get the country beyond this crisis and move forward affirmatively together.

For today's program, you're going to – you can join our conversation on Twitter using #DividedWeFall. I also encourage you to purchase Alice's book from Brookings or in your favorite local bookstore or on Amazon. And before I turn the program over to our next speaker, I do want to thank Cathy Minehan and other donors who have generously supported the Alice Rivlin chair in economic studies that we launched at Brookings shortly after Alice's passing.

We now have raised \$3.3 million towards our goal of \$5 million and we continue to seek the remaining \$1.5 million to make that chair in her name possible. The chair will be awarded to the most senior position in the Economic Studies program, which is the vice president, held by the very able Stephanie Aaronson when it is fully funded.

I also want to thank the Peter D. Peterson Foundation for their generous support for tonight's program and event. And in addition to the Peterson Foundation, they have also generously funded a Rivlin dissertation fellow in fiscal policy.

In closing, I want to thank Cathy, the Peterson Foundation, and others for enabling

Brookings to carry out Alice's spirit through these two efforts.

Now, without further ado, I'd like to introduce Cathy Minehan who will lead our first discussion. Cathy is a member of the Brookings Board of Trustees. Obviously, a major champion of the Alice Rivlin chair. She's also managing partner at Arlington Advisory Partners. She retired from the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston in July 2007 after 39 years with the Federal Reserve system having served as the president and chief executive of the Boston Bank and a member of the Federal Open Market Committee from July 1994 on.

Cathy has many other civic and philanthropic involvements. But like Alice, Cathy cares about her home city too. So I want to add one more notable contribution which is that Cathy cochairs the Boston Women's Workforce Council which works to end gender and racial wage gaps in Boston. So, Cathy, come join us. Thank you.

MS. MINEHAN: Thanks so much, Amy. And thank you all for being at this -- what I think is going to be an incredible conference.

For the first part let the three of us sit down. We have places here. I am going to be having a conversation with Allan and with Sheri who were responsible for the evolution of Alice's book from quite a lot of writing on her part to what we see today.

First, I want to tell a little story because it's impossible to talk about Alice without telling stories. As Amy mentioned, I served with Alice during her time as the vice chair of the Federal Open Market Committee. I didn't know her then except by reputation and, wow, what a reputation. She came along as vice chair. And if memory serves me right, she might have been the first vice chair that was not -- usually the Federal Reserve Bank of New York President is the vice chair, so this was adding another one. And I think it was the first time it was done. I could be wrong about that.

But anyway, she came as a vice chair. And I have to say, my three years serving with her, I have described her many times in introducing her to people speaking in various different forms, my hero. My hero why? Not because she was so expert at the open market operations and bank supervision of the Fed. Of course, she was. There was so many people around the table who were so

expert and so eloquent.

No, Alice was my hero because she saw a problem and she stepped up and solved it. Many of you probably know that the dirty little secret of the Federal Reserve is that it just doesn't do monetary policy. It isn't just a bank regulator. It also manages a lot of stuff you never see. But if it isn't there, you really feel it. And that's the payment system in the United States, the payment system and the securities transfer systems.

With the Monetary Control Act in 1980, Federal Reserve Banks were required to price those services to the private sector and compete with the major commercial banks for the provisions of those services. None of us really knew that checks were a thing of the past, solely going to die away. At the time when Alice was there and I was involved with running payment systems, they were a big deal. And what we charged for our processing was a big deal. And of course, all the banks felt that we competed badly. That we, you know, we were unfair competitors to them, and this has been getting some attention in Congress.

So here comes Alice. She sees the problem. She's not even the Fed policymaker, the Fed -- member of board that is supposed to be involved with payment systems. But she saw the problem. She figured out how to make both Congress and us take a step back and think about where we could find a solution in the middle that would work for both of us. That happened. There were many congressional, you know, little -- we did it without any spats on the part of Congress. We didn't get in the newspapers with it and everybody ended up satisfied, both the commercial banks and us. That was Alice. Alice could find a way to bring consensus out of the most difficult topics. And this was one for us.

So with that in mind, I really would like to welcome both Allan and Sheri. Together, they have a little firm of their own. Let me see now if I can remember the name of it.

MR. RIVLIN: Political Research.

MS. MINEHAN: Yeah. Something like that. And I know you've been working together for a really long time on areas to do with the economy, politics. How the two work together. Consulting on those sorts of issues.

What do you think Alice's deep message is? What did she really want to get across? I mean the title is pretty evident, but beyond that what did she really want to get across?

MR. RIVLIN: Well, your opening story sets it up perfectly because she saw the problem and she wanted to get to a hopeful solution. She saw the problem before many of us in this room did. And the panel that follows has been sort of nicknamed, Hope versus Doom. Which path are we on?

She passed away before the real doom became self-evident, but she could see the --

MS. MINEHAN: Well, there were many dooms before this one, right? Before they looked that way, anyway.

MR. RIVLIN: So she saw the undertow that was building and she did -- was worried about democracy. At whether it would survive a lack of confidence coming from the American people because policymakers were at that period in constant gridlock, constant stalemate, issues not getting resolved and her feeling was if we couldn't come together to solve problems, there were big problems ahead. And so, I think that was one of her urgent messages.

Another one, and I'm glad we have Maya MacGuineas here, is the deficit is too darn big. And we've taken our eye off that. And if the deficit is too big for too long, big problems are coming. She passed away at a time when inflation was very low, and she wrote about that. There was a long period where we weren't really looking at the deficit in the way we're going to have to now, the interest rates and inflation are back.

And so, she was really focused on that. But tying those two together, I think her real impetus for writing the book was the failure of the two deficit commissions she served on to get to the grand bargain that her view was that the experts, the economists, and the budgeters, had a solution for our deficit problem that balanced revenue increases and spending restraint, but the politicians couldn't get there.

And so, as long as the politicians are locked in a standoff, big problems are not getting solved, and the public can realize that. And now, I've got to add one more to the list, which is the inequality issue. And her feeling was that missing the great financial collapse in 2008 and 2009. But

especially the Washington establishment that she was part of and missed what happened in the recovery from that. And how unequal that was as Amy was saying geographically.

And that for some Americans, the discussion going on in Washington right now, are we in a deficit or not? There's some people who have never not been in a deficit going all the way back to 2008.

MS. MINEHAN: Even right here in Washington. Or should I say especially right here in Washington?

MR. RIVLIN: Absolutely. And she had -- at the time of her passing, a real concern on her mind that an urgent message not for the American public but for people in this room, for the economic establishment that they've missed something big and lost a measure of their authority because we missed both the downturn but also the recovery and the unevenness.

And she put that into a speech that she gave for the Brookings' board before the 2016 election. Actually, before the nominating processing was over. And Sheri wanted to read some of that.

MS. MINEHAN: Yeah. Come on, Sheri.

MS. RIVLIN: I'm so excited to read this. Yes, it's an address to the Brookings Institution Board of Directors in March of 2016.

And she says, collectively those of us who purport --

MS. MINEHAN: Everyone here, Sheri.

MS. RIVLIN: Yep. Okay. Collectively, those of us who purport to be experts on monetary and fiscal policy and financial markets totally missed the financial catastrophe of 2008 until it was actually happening. And perhaps more surprisingly, we are now totally amazed by the angry populism of the right and the left.

Where did Trump and Sanders come from? And why are people cheering them so enthusiastically? They don't really fit into our world view. So one of the big challenges for the next 100 years at Brookings and elsewhere in the intellectual establishment is to somehow learn to listen more effectively so we won't be so surprised by reality.



MS. MINEHAN: You know, in my experience with Alice, while she was very receptive to other points of view, she had her own point of view. And I'm kind of wondering how did the book writing process really work? How did the mellowing or melding how did that work?

MS. RIVLIN: Mellowing yes. Well, we're three different people. We have our own views. And there's a tradition that I came late to being a part of the family with Alice for only 30 years, so I was a newcomer to this.

But of people speaking their minds. When we got together, we'd sit around and drink wine and have very strong views all of us. And she enjoyed that. She didn't want everyone to agree with her. She liked the dialogue. She liked lively conversation. She'd be so excited to have been here for the panel for sure.

MR. RIVLIN: This panel coming up is going to be lively conversation, we're pretty sure of it. Sid Winter is over there, and he was part of really the four of us in a process that involved fires and glasses of wine and long discussions, and we did not agree.

I'm somewhat to the left of Alice. Sheri is somewhat to the left of me, and we had long debates. And these continued after Alice passed. Sheri and our process was to get into arguments about what Alice would have said. Where we found gaps in the book. And most of these were resolved two to one. I'd say, Alice would never say that. Sheri would say, oh, yes, she would.

And then by the time I woke up the next morning, Sheri would say, and she did and here it is. And most of the footnotes in the book are pretty much two-to-one arguments that I lost with Sheri and Alice.

MS. MINEHAN: I notice the quote boxes. I notice the two of you are still speaking. I think that's amazing.

MR. RIVLIN: We are.

MS. MINEHAN: I know it's been three or four years since Alice died. But I think you started with her before that, didn't you? She knew you were going to carry on where she couldn't complete?

MR. RIVLIN: Well, the further she got into her illness, the more she knew she was running out of time before she would finish the book. She passed it to us very near the end, but we were deeply involved in -- we knew we were running out of time with her. And so, we were spending an awful lot of time on Chesterfield Place taking advantage of the time we knew we had.

MS. MINEHAN: I see we have two minutes left. So in your own views can we actually make consensus work the way Alice wanted it to work?

MS. RIVLIN: Oh, wow.

MR. RIVLIN: I'll take team hope. And that is that first of all, there are more Americans that want to see democracy succeed. And want to see us decide our differences through reason and discourse rather than violence.

And one of the points that -- Molly Reynolds is in the audience, and she helped us a lot with the political science parts of the book. But the progressive democrats have never been a majority of Congress or the United States. And conservative Republicans have never been a majority of the Congress or the United States. And Trump Republicans are nowhere near a majority of --

MS. MINEHAN: Conservative Republicans, yeah.

MR. RIVLIN: Well, nowhere do they -- Trump unfortunately are a majority of conservative Republicans but not a majority of the whole. And so, these majorities of the majorities are not a majority of the whole. And that is the genius of the United States. Factions can't take over. The system is strong enough so that we can get to decisions even when there are factions that want to take over.

MS. MINEHAN: I think that's an amazingly positive way to begin our panel discussion. Where I think there will be some debates about that particular perspective. So thank you very much, Allan. Thank you, Sheila.

MR. RIVLIN: Thank you so much.

MS. MINEHAN: When I said that I meant Sheri. Now, my next job is to introduce -- it's my pleasure now to introduce the moderator of our next panel, Matt Miller.

In going through his bio, which only takes one page of single-spaced typing to cover. So

you know he's had a realm of experiences, a wide variety of them. I was just jotting some notes down. Certainly, a man for all seasons. He's currently a Partner in Capital Strategies Research, but he started at McKinsey at least from what I can tell from 2004 to 2014.

Ran for Congress, oh, brave man, in California in 2014 and then went from there into public policy journalism. He's no stranger to book authorship or to on the air commentary on the biggest and best networks we have around for political commentaries. So without further ado, Matt. And then you have the job of introducing your panel.

MR. MILLER: Thank you, Cathy. Gosh, why don't you just come up and we'll get started. Everyone, please join us. We've got everybody here? David, Bill? Thanks, Cathy. Thanks Dave Wessel and Sheila for inviting me. It's a real honor to be here. I was also Alice's top aide at OMB the first two years in the Clinton administration, which is why they asked me, I think.

And it's nice to see some friends who we're getting older, but we're still pushing on all the same issues from various domains so it's great to see a lot of Brookings' friends here. I'm really grateful to Allan and Sheri for having finished the book. I knew Alice was working on this when I saw her a few months before the end, and she would be so proud that you guys did what you did to get this over the finish line and get it to a moment like this where it can begin to have influence.

When I was reading this in the last week, I was -- it was like hearing -- especially I'm sure there were passages I could have identified where other hands had played some role, but there were passages where Alice's crisp prose and really succinct intellect framed things in just the way she always did. And it was wonderful to, you know, kind of have that voice in one's head again.

And it's, you know, these are all issues that speak to exactly the moment that we're in. And she speaking to the trajectory of the country in things that all of us are anxious about. I find in my professional role now doing political analysis for a large investment firm that when I make the rounds among opinion leaders like you all and the ones who we'll be hearing from in a moment. There is a demoralization, I think among elites that is a kind of feature of the mix of what's going on. And I think Alice in this book is speaking to that.

I can't tell you how many columnists, authors, think tank types I've asked in the last six months compared to five or ten years ago, are you more or less hopeful about the American project and why? And I find people who are congenital optimists, who are energetic suddenly deflate and explain that they're less hopeful. They don't like saying that and they're not sure quite what to do about it.

And I think that Alice's book, you know, the message that she is kind of injecting now thanks to Allan and Sheri and others, is really timely in that regard. So, you know, the big question is she's optimistic obviously at the end. And this panel gets to ask is she right? Is there hope or are we doomed is the question.

And we couldn't have a better group of gurus to settle that question definitively by 5:45. So let me introduce our panel and then we'll jump in. Alphabetically, not in terms of stature or anything else. Everyone is equal on this panel. David Corn who is right there, is a veteran in Washington journalist and political commentator. He's the Washington bureau chief for Mother Jones magazine and analyst for MSNBC. His most recent book, "American Psychosis: A Historic Investigation of How the Republican Party Went Crazy." It came out two weeks ago. So welcome, David.

Bill Galston who obviously everyone knows here at Brookings, holds the Ezra K. Zilkha chair in the Brookings Governance Studies program where he serves as the senior fellow. He writes the indispensable weekly Politics and Ideas column in the Wall Street Journal. He has authored 10 books, more than 100 articles. He's been in six presidential campaigns, and he was at the White House as a deputy assistant to President Clinton when I was working for Alice. So welcome to you, Bill.

Maya MacGuineas right next to me. Again, as folks know, the president of the Bipartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget. She's a budget expert and political independent. She's worked with folks on both sides for a long time. She's testified regularly before Congress. She's published everywhere and is a reigning authority on matters that were close to Alice's heart and worked along with her. So welcome to you, Maya.

And then finally, but not at all leastly, Molly Reynolds is a senior fellow in Governance Studies here at Brookings. She studies Congress with an emphasis on how congressional rules and

procedure effect domestic policy outcomes. She is also the author of the book, "Exceptions to the Rule: The Politics of Filibuster Limitations in the U.S. Senate" which explores the creation, use and consequences of the budget reconciliation process and other procedures that prevent filibusters in the U.S. Senate which I'm sure we'll be getting into. So, Molly, welcome to you.

A lot to talk about. I want to start off with Bill Galston who in, I guess, in kind of interesting Brookings fashion mentioned to me before we began as we were gathering today that he has read the book now. And has a few thoughts he thought he might want to kick us off with. Maybe about the intersection of culture in economics and how that relates to the kind of divisiveness that Alice describes in the book.

There maybe even a thing or two he disagrees with Alice on that he'll raise as well. So, Bill, why don't you kick us off?

MR. GALSTON: Well, thanks, Matt. It's great to see you after all of your years of exile to the left coast. Welcome back to the right.

I have read this book with great attention. And in my judgment, it is two books braided together. One of those books has to do with an account of fiscal and budget processes, conflicts, histories, and it is incomparable. I'd be a fool to venture into that book and I'm not going to. I mean she - - Alice speaks with a voice of authority, experience. You name the noun that's auditory and it attaches to her.

The second book which I think is considerably shorter in pages is a freestanding effort to explain the rise of political polarization in the United States. And I think the relationship between those two books is loose in the sense that it is very difficult to explain political polarization and its rise to the United States through the prism of the budget process and conflicts over fiscal issues. That's a part of it, but it's far from the whole.

As I reflected on this two books phenomenon, I decided that I had three significant analytical disagreements with Alice. And now liberated by the account of fireside, wine-soaked chats that we have just heard from Allan. I think I'm going to stir the pot just a little bit in very brief remarks. And

they're going to be more -- they are evidence based but obviously I'm not going to have time to, you know, provide that evidence in these opening remarks.

First of all, you could easily get the impression from the book as a whole that Alice regarded developments on the economic front as the principal drivers of political polarization. I happen to disagree with that. And so, do a lot of political scientists who have opined on this question recently. I believe that debates and cleavages over culture issues which include but go well beyond racial issues are at the heart of what has divided us and has infused so much passion into those divisions.

Secondly, like everybody else who has looked at the sweep of American politics over the past 50 or 60 years. Alice's take -- Alice takes note of and worries about the declining trust in government particularly the national government. She's right to focus on that but I find her account of why trust in government has collapsed. And I think that's the right description unpersuasive.

She offers as far as I can tell two principal hypotheses about the decline of trust in government. One pivots around the idea that rising economic inequality has driven the decline in trust. That is a possible hypothesis, but it is not supported by the data.

And let me just give you a couple of points here. At the end of 1964, 77 percent of the American people said, that they trusted the federal government to do the right thing all or most of the time. Ten years later, at the end of 1974, that's 77 percent had declined to 36 percent. That was half a century ago that we saw 36 percent. The decline continued unabated until it bottomed out at 25 percent near the end of 1980, about the time that Ronald Reagan beat Jimmy Carter. And it has remained in that zone ever since.

In the 10 years from 1964 until 1974, we made a historic transition from a high trust society to a low trust society. And we have been a low trust society for half a century. It moved up a little bit during the presidency of Ronald Reagan. Declined back into the mid-20s in the presidency of Bush '41. It rose during Bill Clinton's eight years. And declined again during Bush '43. And it has been stuck at that low level ever since. Through the presidencies of Barack Obama and Donald Trump with almost no variation.

Alice has a second hypothesis about trust in government. And that is that it is a response to a lead failure. Obviously, intuitively there's got to be something to that, but the example that she comes back to over and over again, and I can understand why, is the failure of a financial elite to anticipate and ward off the financial collapse that led to the Great Recession.

So you might think that before the Great Recession trust in government would have been significantly higher than it was after the end of the Great Recession, but that's simply not true, right? Trust in government did not change from the before times to the after times. And so, neither of those hypothesis -- neither of Alice's hypotheses really explains very successfully the diminution of trust in government.

And now, from my third analytical point, I am going to commit a heresy in the church of Brookings. Like many people, Alice accepts the hypothesis or accepted, I should say, I mean she's so much of a living presence that I lapsed into the present tense all the time. So I'll use the present tense. Accepts the hypothesis of what's known in the political science trade as asymmetrical polarization.

What that means in plain English is the hypothesis that over the past, say, generation or two Republicans have moved to the right much further than Democrats moved to the left. Among elected officials that's true. But when you look at the rank and file, it is not true.

The book cites the Pew 2017 study on the rise of political polarization. And as I squint at that reading Alice's book, I said to myself that's funny. It looks to me as though the median Democrat voter has moved much further to the left between 1994 and 2017 than median Republican voter did. And when I read the report and couldn't get any statistical clarity, I got in touch with the Associated Research Director at Pew who confirmed it with a wealth of statistics.

So we have a kind of paradox here. Where on the one hand, Republican elected officials have gone much further to the right than Democratic elected officials went to the left. But at the rank-and-file level, the transformation in the Republican party between 1994 and 2017 was less profound than the transformation of the democratic party.

You know, people who call themselves liberals is a share of the democratic party rose

much more than the fraction of people who call themselves conservatives. In fact, it doubled from 25 to 50 percent at the same time. And this will be the end of my remarks. At the same time, that conservatives as a share of the democratic party fell by half to almost 12 percent.

So between 1994 and 2017, the democratic party became a predominantly liberal party which it was not when you and I met, served in the White House. The Republican party was a conservative party then and it's a conservative party now.

MR. MILLER: These are excellent opening thoughts that I want to park a little bit because I want to get some other folks in on some different topics. I've also just been handed a note that we've got 10 more minutes than I expected, which maybe unrelated to the filibuster. Some may say you - I'm teasing but I'm glad we have a little more time because we're going to talk about filibusters.

And I want to get into some of those issues and I'm really glad you also brought up the left-leaningness bill because I noticed that myself when I was reading it and had a question about it because I think it effects what the potential solutions are as we build on what Alice is suggesting.

But Molly, let me bring you in. And I know you thought about -- you think about congressional process. And we'll talk about it. I want to come back to some of the specific solutions that Alice talks about. But I know you've also thought since January 6<sup>th</sup> about a whole set of issues that go beyond budget process, filibuster, et cetera. Can you talk a little about what you've been thinking about since January 6<sup>th</sup> as it relates to Alice's themes and messages and where that kind of leave you right now?

MS. REYNOLDS: Sure. So first of all, thanks for having me as part of this conversation.

So I'll say that one of the big things that I took away from the book was as sort of what Bill reflected on. Alice's long personal experience building consensus in Washington and kind of what that -- how that contributed to her analysis of the situation.

And when I think of one of the things that I think has changed most profoundly in the process of trying to make policy and come to consensus since January 6<sup>th</sup> is that it has -- January 6<sup>th</sup> broke down a lot of the interpersonal relationships that are necessary to achieve the sort of bipartisan



outcomes that Alice writes about in the book.

So there's a chapter where she discusses the fact that, you know, it is well established in the political science literature that most things, that most bills that get signed into law are still bipartisan. That is in some ways a necessity that flows from the existence of the filibuster. We could talk about the future of the filibuster but given that the filibuster exists most things that happen still do happen on a bipartisan basis.

But to get to that point, we need a legislature. We need a Congress where the individuals who do the kind of hard behind the scenes work, wherever Cathy went talking about Alice as a problem solver. We need the kind of people who do the problem-solving work to be able to get along and do that work collaboratively. And I think in Capitol Hill by my read of the situation so much of what has happened on a day-to-day basis since January 6<sup>th</sup> is that that has really fallen apart in some important ways.

And so, as we think about what we might learn from Alice's kind of call to, you know, the subtitle of the book is why consensus matters. How do we get back to that point? Or how do we sort of continue to work -- to have a Congress that works to find consensus where it needs to? One of the big challenges for me that I reflect on a lot is just how do we do that in the environment that folks now find themselves in?

MR. MILLER: Great. Those are great thoughts. Now, David, I want to bring you in. You know, it looks like the Republicans are going to win at least the House. So even accepting that potentially as a premise. That means we're headed for investigations of Hunter Biden. Investigations of the --

MR. CORN: More than one.

MR. MILLER: More than one --

MR. CORN: More than 12.

MR. MILLER: Investigations of COVID relief, arguable scams, investigations of withdrawal from Afghanistan, maybe impeachment. It's hard to know for sure. You've got a book out called "American Psychosis" about the right, which is a great title.

It sounds like what we may be seeing after the midterms is just what you would expect. And you might argue it's hopeless to think that we can come together in the kind of vision that Alice is hoping for. Do you want to trample on her dreams right now? And lay that -- or how are you thinking about what's ahead?

MR. CORN: Well, first thanks for having me here at Brookings and I enjoyed reading the book. Like everybody else, my first question is what would you think now, right?

Since, you know, 2019 we've had not just January 6<sup>th</sup>, but the pandemic, the Big Lie and we've seen the Republican party actually move more in the direction of Trump craziness than away from it.

So when I think of consensus, I really think about consensus among whom? I do believe -- and this is kind of the point of my book -- that the strong point of the Republican party DNA has always been extremism. And you can, you know, paranoia, through racism, tribalism. You know, fierce anti-governmentism which she recognizes in the book.

And, you know, the way I see it over the course of the last seven decades, you know, it has waxed and weaned but like with climate change the trend line is in a pretty clear direction. And with Trump's embrace of QAnon and his embrace of violence saying that he would pardon the January 6<sup>th</sup> insurrectionists if he were elected again. The Republican party has not blinked an eye at him.

So they're fully behind a man who has endorsed political violence and endorsed complete nuttury, which demonizes and dehumanizes political opposition. So if you, you know, you can calculate this a lot of different ways. I thought about this, and others have as well. How much of the public is behind full Trumpism?

But if you get anywhere from 20 to 30 percent of, you know, I admire the sentiments in the book, but you can't have a consensus with those people. I really believe going back to the days of George Kennan, you need to think about containment strategies. You can't engage. They won't engage. How do you expect them to engage with people who they believe are eating babies, sex trafficking out of common pizza and actually want to destroy America?

And if you go to their allies this is what they say. And the Republican party is in hoc to its base as most parties are. So I don't, you know, yeah. You know, there was a gun bill passed that was moderate because Mitch McConnell wanted to take that issue off the table, right?

There was some consensus of bipartisanship and infrastructure and chips.

MR. MILLER: But those are nontrivial things.

MR. CORN: No. No, they're not nontrivial. But it was a little bipartisanship. It wasn't a lot of bipartisanship. And it was done because of, you know, politics be gained at the selection. But if you look at where the heart and soul, the party is. And I would take exception to Bill in terms of looking at who's more conservative now? And who's more liberal now? Because I don't think that's the dividing line.

I don't think it's not asking people whether they're more conservative Republicans or more liberal Republicans. I think you ask them was Barak Obama born in America? Do you believe that the Democrats are, you know, pedophiles? And they're not going to -- you know, whether they're conservative or not, the answer is like in 40, 50, 60 percent for Republicans. That is a radicalization --

MR. MILLER: That think that Obama -- or that think that Democrats are pedophiles?

MR. CORN: Yes. Yes. After the remarks that were made at the Supreme Court hearing, the nomination hearing.

And so, that's a radicalization of the Republican base that the Republican party is tied to. And while, you know, I'd love to honest policy debates whether it's of guns, abortion, foreign policy, the things that we used to have in this town, and I used to be a participant in. I don't believe that's possible in the near term. And I think people have to recognize that.

And then once you know that then you can think about how to protect democracy and how to move ahead on whatever legislative priorities you have because I'm telling you, you know, you know this. You've just mentioned this. If the Republicans win back the House, their only interest really in terms of their base is political destruction.

They don't want government to work. They don't want the Democrats to be partners and

the few that did, well, there's a reason why they won't be there in January. They're gone. So I mean, you know, I like the idea of trying to forge, you know, partnerships and bipartisan alliances where you can. I think the fundamentals are such that we need to think, you know, how to save the country short of -- you know, without bipartisan agreements.

MR. MILLER: I appreciate -- I want to put you aside. I have a question about whether the percentages are that high on some of the beliefs you're ascribing to the Republican base. But let's put that aside for next time. I want to get Maya in. And I certainly take your point on the general lens that you are bringing to this most passionately.

Maya, you worked with Alice for a long time on budget issues. We have a midterm election where if we end up in a divided government again which seems likely. Are we -- it seems like we're going to be destined towards another set of fiscal clips and budget showdowns and debt ceiling showdowns at some point again.

With that as the climate over the next two years including the stuff that David is talking about, which one might say, David, it's an agenda of destruction for the base. Or a different way to put it might be it's arguably an agenda just setting the Democrats up for defeat in 2024 through whatever means they have at their disposal.

But how do you think about the prospects for consensus given what may lay ahead? And is there any lesson from the fact that even with the tense environment we've had some of these things like the Infrastructure Bill and Chips which are nontrivial happen?

MS. MACGUINEAS: Good. Thank you.

MR. MILLER: Or take it where you will.

MS. MACGUINEAS: Okay. Well, first, I want to say, congratulations to both of you for finishing this book. The book is wonderful. And I don't know if any of you have the feeling I did thinking about this but if I tried to write a book with my husband in my mother-in-law's voice, it would not have gone as well.

MR. MILLER: That's a good point.

MS. MACGUINEAS: So a double congratulations to both of you. I think it's a really important book at a really important time.

And the second thing is I would like to just sit. It's really nice to be in this room with so many people who loved Alice. And I would like to just sit and talk about Alice. That's what I would like to do. And I know she would probably not want that. She would want us to talk about this.

And I did have a really couple, wonderful experiences where at the end of her life, she invited me over to come and talk. And I was so honored and got to go. And I was like, okay, Alice just sit down. Let's just talk about your life. Tell me everything. I'm so excited to be here.

She likes, Maya, we're here to talk about the book. Now, I want to know -- and she worked, I mean, as you all know. In the hospital, I gather. But she was working insanely hard and productively at the -- while struggling to breath at some points. It was unbelievable. So that is Alice and it's inspiring.

Okay. So moving as she would want to, to the topic. On fiscal policy, what do I think? I think there are two things we should expect assuming we have the divided government that I assume we're about to have. And one is that absolutely nothing will happen of substance on policies. Nothing will get passed. And I think that is what's likely except I can't even envision what emergencies are going to hit us next, right? Because it's a world of being punched in the face every day you wake up with some new thing you didn't expect.

So I don't know what will create different kinds of action. And I think what's really important is what she talks about. The core group of people in the middle who are trying to work together through these emergencies and you saw it. You've seen it emerge around COVID and you saw it emerge with Ukraine. And there are different moments of that. And so, will there be continued emergencies that are able to unify the country as people are working on doing that? Cross our fingers.

I'll just go to my punchline. I'm in the camp of doom, right? I'm big, big doom big time. So I wish Alice were here kind of lifting up my -- because I would talk with her about issues. And we would have the same conversation. See things slightly differently, but mostly the same. But then I would

be definitely pessimistic, and she would be so optimistic and could convince me. So I miss that.

But the other option on fiscal is the only way that you see things get done is if you increase the debt. And so, the only way that all of these bipartisan bills that have passed, whether it's the problem solvers, whether it's chips, whether it's infrastructure. A lot of things that were really good policies in my opinion and would have been in Alice's I'm sure were passed because they were debt financed. And given that she wrote so much and concentrated so much on the unsustainable situation that we're in. And she did this as you all are reminding me before MMT had really become a huge thing.

Before inflation had emerged. And at first, oh, it's transitory. You know, who knows where she would have been on this? But now that it's not, this is a very different environment. And so, she, I assume and I want to make sure none of us get into the habit of saying, Alice would think this whenever we think something.

But I think Alice would think the situation is much worse right now fiscally than it was before. And so, either of those situations, we will do nothing when there's so many things we need to do. Because the other part of what she cared about fiscally wasn't just fiscal responsibility. It was having a budget that really committed sufficient resources to investment. Public investment and human capital in particular.

And so she would want to make sure that we are doing all of those things. So being paralyzed and not end the debt would in no way be reassuring. And the fact that the only way we can compromise is borrowing when we right now are in a situation where the fastest growing part of the budget is interest payments where we have seen that just -- you know, we are on track to borrow more than \$16 trillion over the next 10 years if we do nothing. If there's no recession. If there's no emergency. So those concerns only grow greater.

So I don't think there's a lot of cause for pessimism on the fiscal front right now.

MR. MILLER: Optimism you mean.

MS. MACGUINEAS: Excuse me, yeah.

MR. MILLER: That was a big shift. I didn't see that pivot coming.

MS. MACGUINEAS: No. Yeah, I wish I thought that. No, I can't even hear Alice's voices, which I do hear often. I can't even hear her voice being particularly optimistic on the fiscal situation at this moment.

MR. MILLER: Bill, let me cycle back to you. But people should jump in as we take on these topics so it's not just kind of, you know, going down the row here.

I take your point, Bill, that the culture aspects of the current polarization are not something that was kind of Alice's -- allows necessarily what she was focused on in the book. But I wonder if you could think a little bit about what do you think the -- because she would want us to focus on solutions. I'm slipping into the what would Alice want us to do? As opposed to what she would say.

But the kind of culture aspect, the arguable lack of empathy between the two sides very often and the declining trust. You know, what particular source you might attribute to it or have quarrels with the way she exactly attributes it. The whole Mayakoba section, I thought at the beginning. When you guys called the Mayakoba section. I thought was really important and very Alice like.

And I don't hear a lot of the economic establishment talking that much about, well, here are three big things we missed and no surprise that there's a total loss of authority and confidence that the public has among elites and why that means that the Sanders' version of populism and the Trump version of populism get enormous traction.

I guess the question, Bill, is how would you begin to address some of the culture issues and the -- and if it's an empathy gap. If it's a, you know, the kind of better discourse Alice talks about in the book and various groups she suggests. Some of which you've been a leader in. Where do we go on those things? Give us your best two minutes on that. I'm kidding.

MR. GALSTON: I was afraid you'd ask for that. Well, let me just take a couple.

I think a very large book could be written, you know, on the rise of gender politics as one of the major sources of division between the two political parties. And we really need to have a blunt anonymous conversation about that. Here's a great place to start. Everybody should go out and buy Richard Reeves just published book on (inaudible) in better bookstores everywhere. At least, you know,

at least the wise better bookstores everywhere.

And read it carefully especially the empirical parts. And then see what kind of conversation might be possible to cross the lines of party and ideology. I think understanding and I will use a very long phrase here. Understanding the sources of male grievance that have fueled so much of the rise of populism. It doesn't mean capitulating to it. But understanding it and figuring out what to do about it. I think would be a big step forward.

MR. MILLER: I'm sorry this is not working. Repeat that please. I'm kidding.

MR. GALSTON: Thanks, Matt. And so, here's a second one, okay. According to the best book I know of, you know, on the 2016 presidential election by John Sides, Tesler and Lynn Vavreck. The single most important issue propelling Donald Trump to victory was immigration.

The silence of Democrats and liberals on the subject of immigration is deafening. It's as though people like us are hoping that nobody will raise the subject. News flash, the subject has been raised. And we don't have the luxury of silence. There was a time when Democrats and liberals were part of an active discussion about a major bipartisan compromise on immigration reform.

I'm not saying the prospects for it have improved since then. But it seems to me that just hoping the issue will go away is no way of making progress on it. And dismissing concerns about border security as racism does not advance the conversation. It squelches the conversation and that is not helping people who want a more reasonable tone and content to American politics. And I could go on.

MR. MILLER: And as you know that's driving politics in Sweden, in France, in Italy. That dynamic where the center left has nothing to say except to call those who have concerns about the pace of demographic change racist is driving a big piece of the populism that we're seeing.

So some of this we can continue in the cocktail hour and beyond. But, Molly, I do want to get you in also on some of the specific things Alice talks about filibuster reform, two-year budget. We can get Maya in on that also. The getting everything into the budget, which both of you might have thoughts on including the tax expenditures which were I know always near and dear to her heart. As well as including entitlement. So we're not just fighting just about the discretionary thing.



Would they be effective? Is there any prospect of any of this happening? Is the filibuster doomed to fall anyway in the next few years? And what would be the consequence of that?

MS. REYNOLDS: Yeah. So I'll talk a little bit about the filibuster and then I'll let Maya come in on some of the more budget specific reforms.

So I think it's -- I just want to say it's pretty remarkable or it's a pretty remarkable statement about where the discourse on the filibuster has moved. That Alice Rivlin in the book suggested that we should abolish the filibuster. I think that, you know, in -- certainly, in the last decade or so where the center of gravity is on the utility -- the continued utility of the filibuster has really shifted.

And so, the idea that someone like Alice for whom consensus is so important came to believe that the filibuster has become an impediment to solving the problems that face the country. Some of which she talks about in the book. Some of which have come up in this discussion. I think it's really notable.

MR. MILLER: Can you tell Kyrsten Sinema that? Can we get her talking about the book?

MS. REYNOLDS: If I have a direct line to convince Kyrsten Sinema of anything, I would be making more money than Megan La'Shar (phonetic). But I will say my personal opinion is that the filibuster is not long for this world. And the real question is sort of what is the issue that brings one party or the other under conditions of unified party control?

What is the issue that really breaks the band on the filibuster? And over the past, you know, 18 months, we've had thoughts that, you know, is it voting rights? Is it -- I'll admit there was a moment about a year ago when I thought it might be the debt limit that at some point there will be an issue that the majority under unified party control cares deeply enough about getting done.

Has the votes to want to change and that will sort of break the dam. And there's a discussion of all the things that will flow more quickly down the river.

MR. MILLER: And what do you think -- do you think Republicans will under McConnell? Because I remember McConnell resisted. Trump was constantly Tweeting to end the filibuster, end the

filibuster so we can get things done. How do you interpret McConnell's resistance to that? Do you think that if Republicans had unified control so it wasn't just a Senate gesture they would eliminate?

MS. REYNOLDS: So I think so much of what kept the filibuster in place during the two years of unified Republican control in 2017 and 2018 was the ability of Republicans to the extent they had a policy agenda. To achieve that policy agenda through the budget reconciliation process, which allows things to move through the Senate without the threat of a filibuster. So they could try it turns out and fail at repealing Obama care. And they could cut taxes. And then they could confirm judges without the filibuster because that had already been chipped away.

So I don't know what it would be. I think there are real questions about whether it would be a national abortion ban and opposed to Dobbs world. I don't know. But I think that that for me that's always the question. Is sort of not if but when? And on what issue is really changes the game.

MR. MILLER: And before I get Maya in on this. I remember hearing McConnell once make the remark that if the filibuster fell, what would happen is -- and I think he was saying this as a negative outcome. You would have big swings back and forth as party control shifted. Who knows?

For a decade until the American people kind of impose some settlement on these various issues. Do you think that's right? That's what would happen if it falls?

MS. REYNOLDS: So I think that assumes more unity in the legislative parties than we actually have. I think that assumes -- I like to say the Senate's rules aren't magic. They don't force agreement where agreement doesn't exist. And the failure of Obama care repeal is a great example of that.

Republicans could have done that without the filibuster. And they simply could not come to agreement within the party about what that would look like. And so, I'm not in agreement with Senator McConnell on that. I think that the -- while the biggest divide in American politics is between the parties. There isn't enough difference within the parties that it would temper some of that.

MR. MILLER: Maya, the budget things? Eliminate the debt ceiling Alice calls for? My guess is you may have done that also to your budgets. Any of this likely to happen? Would it matter?

MS. MACGUINEAS: So I think the one that I'm most drawn to is where she says, in the budget you would include everything. So bring in tax expenditures which are just a form of spending. Bring in the mandatory spending that's automatic, which is the big part driving our problems and actually create a budget.

That said, we don't even pass budgets. We don't have budgets. So it doesn't really matter what we're budgeting because we don't do budgets most years at this point. So it's more fundamental or a problem that -- honestly, biannual budgeting it's a bit of snoozer. Like it's not really going to fix much of anything is my personal opinion.

We support it, but it's not going to fix the budget process. Maybe just because I'm a procrastinator. And since I do everything at the last minute anyhow. If you give you two years, Congress is just going to wait until the last minute to not pass a budget after two years. So I don't think there's a big fix that's ready to come there.

The check on budget and budget processes is how you create accountability and how you create default, so we did a commission. It must have been 14, 10, 15, 12 years ago which Alice was kind of the brain part of which we were thinking about how we could change the whole budget process. And what we ended up recommending was that you have fiscal targets. So you have something you're shooting for.

Right now, when you pass the budget there's no constraint. There's no limit. You can, you know, if you do pass a budget, you can borrow infinity other than the debt ceiling. But so, you would have fiscal targets and if you failed to reach them there would be defaults. So if Congress isn't going to do the hard work of budgeting, how would you have defaults where things would have happen?

And there's two questions about those defaults. Should they be horrible and punitive like we had during the super committee and other time? The answer is no because then you will just waive them and you will not do them. But if you have defaults that are actually sensible policies like gradually index life expectancy and social security's retirement age. If you're unwilling to fix the program. Gradually lift the payroll tax cap. Things like that which would do the budgeting that members of

Congress aren't. That might be a better policy. So I think you have to do things like that.

But I think the big issue is we don't have a budgetary process that forces us to confront tradeoffs. And we also don't have a political process. Do I have two more minutes? Ninety seconds?

MR. MILLER: Yeah, yeah.

MS. MACGUINEAS: Okay. Because I wanted to respond to, Bill, your question about how budgeting and polarization don't really live together. And that it's two parts of a book.

But actually, we have found that we think they do because we've started a little project within the committee for responsible federal budget called Fix Us. And the reason is because there's so many similarities in these issues. And the way I think about it a lot is that the problem with the budget has been we don't focus on good policy. We focus on good politics, right?

When I go in and say you've got to raise taxes. You've got to cut spending, they're like, no, no, no. We're not doing that. Not until after the election. And then not until after the next election. But those are the right policies on fiscal policy, but we're focused on politics. You have to focus on not the short term, not the immediate but the long term. And that's when the health of the fiscal -- if you make fiscal choices that are right it helps you for the long term, not so much the short term.

You have to confront tradeoffs where you can't have it all. If you spend it all on one thing, you can't spend it on something else. But instead, in this economic and political environment, we love policies that pretend they're free lunches. Whether it's tax cuts pay for themselves or MMT. Like we love to say things are free.

And finally, you have to be willing to compromise. And in our budgetary situation, we don't compromise that much that's everything that's bipartisan is borrowed. And our political situation, we don't compromise that much because everybody either says like it's an absolute, existential threat no matter what the issue is. Every single one is existential. You know, and if there's a moral imperative that we do it this way. So we can't compromise.

And so, I see there being a huge overlap, Bill, these days between what was wrong with fiscal policy in the past 20 years into what's really driving the polarization of the focus on the short term,

the political, the inability to compromise and the unwillingness to confront tradeoffs. So I think they do belong together in those ways.

MR. MILLER: We're going to go to Q&A after one last question. So formulate your question and I think there will be a microphone passed? There may be a microphone passed so it can be captured for the ages.

David, let me -- before we go to Q&A if Trump withdrew from public life tomorrow or something happened to him. If he dropped dead tomorrow people always ask would the Republican party be different? Would American psychosis go away? Would the outlook and your optimism about the future be brighter? Opine.

MR. CORN: Well, it might be brighter maybe not for the right reasons. I mean, you know, having done --

MR. MILLER: Is this a Trump problem basically?

MR. CORN: Yeah, yeah. It's not a Trump problem is the short answer. Trumpism is the problem not Trump. And, you know, what I found looking over the past 70 years sort of the span of the modern Republican party after World War II, you find that there has always been this -- what we could call now Trumpy element. Whether, you know, of extremism and demagoguery and dehumanization. No nothingness going back to the 1850s.

It's always been there. Barry Goldwater made a pact with the Birchers (phonetic). The Eisenhower initially made his piece and supported Joe McCarthy though he hated him. Nixon got the nomination in '68 because he cut a deal with Strom Thurmond to keep Ronald Reagan at bay. Ronald Reagan, you know, embraced the moral majority when its leaders were actually calling for the execution of homosexual Americans.

You know, George H.W. Bush ran what we thought was the dirtiest campaign ever in 1988. It seems kind of quaint now. He just called Michael Dukakis, you know, not patriotic because he was part of the ASOU. George W. Bush, wanted to be a compassionate conservative but when he was threatened by John McCain, he ran to Bob Jones University which is a racist institution and an anti-

Catholic institution and used all the tricks of the Christian coalition down in South Carolina to preserve his path to power and then rewarded them with positions and appointments when he became president.

John McCain who posed the Christian, you know, right in 2000 and 2008 gave us Sarah Palin who, you know, demonized Barak Obama has a power of terrorists. And said he wanted to impose a socialist tyranny on America. A year later, you had the tea party that said he was a secret socialist Muslim who is born in Africa. Had a secret plan to impose totalitarianism on America by destroying our economy.

I mean this was -- (inaudible) said this every single night on Fox and John Banner, Republican Senators went on and validated it and authenticated him. And then Banner welcomed the tea party, and we know what happened to him.

MR. MILLER: So it's not just Trump?

MR. CORN: But it's not just Trump, but the point is but if you look at this each wave of this is more intense. It's deeper and more radicalized. And Trump, I think sensed that in 2015. And while you have Republicans out there saying, you know, what's your budget plan? What's your housing plan? What's your tax plan? Bobby Jindal was better on this. And Chris Christy is better on the infrastructure. Trump said, fuck it. I don't care about any of that.

You guys have been throwing them red meat for decades. I can throw the reddest meat. And he further radicalized the base. And you can look at the polls, you know, that I cited earlier and that's where we are. And so, that base is not going to go back to wanting to have polite policy decisions about one or two-year budget planning. I wish they were, but I don't think they are. They're going to want more of what Trump and the Republicans have fed them over the last few decades.

So therefore, if he's gone, they're still going to be out there. You know, there are a lot of other ambitious politicians who realize this.

MR. MILLER: Let's go to Q&A. Raise your hand and we'll have someone bring over a microphone to you. Somebody there? Yes, Mr. E.J. Deon. I see him in the back.

MR. DEON: Boy, do I miss Alice Rivlin. And I just want to thank the -- I really, really

want to thank Sheri and Allan for putting this book together. What a labor of love and a service to all of us.

I want to agree with part of Bill's critique but disagree with the other. And, Bill, I bet know which I will because I do think he's right that culture was the radicalizing part. Although, I think the Trump years are very peculiar in that respect because it was cultural conservatism largely put to the use of economic conservatism.

Yes, he was tougher on trade, but the main achievements of the Trump years were a big tax cut and a lot of conservative judges. Because conservative judges, however, speak to the culture divide.

Where I disagree with him, and I think Alice is right. And I just -- I scribbled down, Bill, a whole bunch of numbers, and I won't throw them all at you. But I want to throw three at you. On the one hand, you're quite right that democratic party has become more liberal because young people are more liberal. Southern conservatives have become Republican.

But the fact is the Republican party is still far more conservative than the Democrats are liberal. 2022 Pew numbers show that -- or these Gallup numbers 74 percent of Republicans identified as conservatives. Still with all that change only 50 percent of Democrats identify as liberal.

Alan Abramowitz found that from '72 to '12, to 2012, the proportion of the Democrats who put themselves in the center of the political spectrum dropped from 54 to 41. But the Republicans dropped from 44 to 22. So I do think that asymmetric polarization is a reality. And the last datum I would throw at you, Bill, on this is in 2016 and 2020, Democrats nominated the moderate candidates, Clinton and Biden. In 2016 and 2020, the Republicans nominated Trump and Trump.

And so, I'd just love you to sort of talk a bit about why you think that piece of Alice's argument is wrong because I do -- as you know I believe passionately that this polarization is asymmetric and I think the data show it. But I'm always open to you because you always teach me things. So thank you, Bill.

QUESTIONER: Can I piggyback on that, Matt?

MR. MILLER: Yes.

QUESTIONER: Because I want to raise a similar issue to what E.J. just said. I also, want to congratulate Alan and Sheri on the book. Fantastic job, you guys. And I want to welcome Sid Winter here, Alice's husband. It's wonderful, Sid that you can be here with us.

But to pile on here, my question I think is about the economics versus culture. As you know, I very much agree with you that the problem is mainly cultural right now. But when we think about - - we go back to the lack of trust in government that you talked about, and that Alice talked about, and we all know well. This long-term trend of dropping confidence and trust in government. Then you have to ask the next question. What caused that?

And I'm not sure that wasn't largely economic in terms of inequality and people left behind and the communities left behind. And so, I'd like you to talk a little more about that.

MR. MILLER: In a restart is 5:55 a hard stop? Boy, we will never be able to do justice to this, which I know is going to be a rich -- I'm happy to continue it over cocktails if we want to. It's a real unruly Brookings' crowd. It's the typical thing. Once you let them get in, it's out of control. They start throwing datum across the room. Go ahead, Bill.

MR. GALSTON: Okay. Very quickly. First of all, you know, two things to E.J. There's a difference between a snapshot and a trend. And so, there's no disagreement between us at all. You were talking about the snapshot now. Absolutely. The Republicans are more uniformly conservative than Democrats are liberal.

I was talking about what has happened according to Pew. You know, between their first polarization study in 1994 and their last one in 2017. And there the data are absolutely clear, and I confirmed this as I mentioned in my opening remarks with Pew's, you know, with Pew's Associate Director from Research that as measured by their 10-point ideological scale, the Democratic rank and file during that period has moved further to the left from where they were at the beginning than the Republican rank and file has to the right.

Now, we can start debating what that means, but those are the data according to Pew.



And that's perfectly consistent with the Gallup data that you put on the table. Very quickly --

MR. MILLER: But wasn't there a difference between moving and policy? And moving perhaps what you might call -- I'm not an expert here -- attitudes. I mean there are things that ideological shift may not capture if we're talking about culture matters which are not just limited to what you think on immigration reform.

QUESTIONER: There's also the question of how much of that is polarization? So individuals taking more extreme views. And how much of it is sorting which is people who would identify as to E.J.'s point about Southern conservatives. They're now -- Southern conservative Democrats are now Republicans.

MR. MILLER: Right.

QUESTIONER: The idea that people who identify as conservative are now sorting into the Republican party more than people who identify as liberal are now -- and they are now sorting into the Democratic party.

MR. GALSTON: Well, that's perfectly consistent with my argument. It's another way of explaining it. Look, David, what you put on the table is a really deep question that we should resolve over cocktails, but the answer is standard measures. Standard measures of ideological positioning do not address the issues of intensity that you're talking about. And so, there's less to scream at that meets the eye.

QUESTIONER: Bill, to your question very quickly. The reason that I talked about the 10 years from 1964 to 1974 is that those were not years in which the rise of economic inequality was the dominant phenomena. Those were the years dominated by Vietnam, Watergate, the rise of the counterculture, the rise of social movements. You've heard me to give this talk before.

As a matter of fact, in your summer vacation town. And that is what happened when the huge drop between the high trust and the low trust society occurred. And we've never looked back. So, you know, there's problem attributing things that happened after. Saying that the drop is attributable to things that happened after the drop, right? That won't work analytically.

MR. MILLER: Well, we'll continue some of this over cocktails. I want to get Maya in and then I want to make a last moderator's provocation as well.

MS. MACGUINEAS: So I wanted to take a step back and just on the sort of what are the root causes of how we got here? Which I think is so important. And again, back to some of those conversations I had in the last weeks with Alice.

A lot of the discussion was of the root causes, what's political? What's economic? What's cultural? What's the failure of elites? And one that I don't think is in the book and we didn't -- I don't think she agreed with as much or we didn't talk about it as much but is the world technology.

And to me that's the big missing piece in all of this. I actually could be an optimist if we were trying to grabble with politics, economic, cultural and failure of elites. But technology which has led us to a situation where information is as we know we're on our own ecosystems now. The disinformation is so, so bad. And getting so much worse. And it will eat away at everything that will allow us to fix it in my mind.

The friction listness of the way that things now spread. And then finally, the effects of technology in our brains to the point where we are no longer able to do the things that a democracy needs which is dealing nuance have kind of rationale debates. Have impulse control and avoid the addictions that we now feel. Those are the things that lead me so pessimistic.

I would like not to add on my -- end on my note. So maybe you can end on a better note. But I think wrestling with what level. They're all part of the root causes, but how they interact is a really interesting piece, I think.

MR. MILLER: Let me just add kind of a moderator's provocation because I know we have to go to cocktails. But I think a piece of this also maybe at least among some of us here is I think a misinterpretation of what Trump represented.

I guess I would argue Trump doesn't represent conservatism. I think Trump represents -- I always talk to my colleagues about Trump representing a kind of third-party force in American politics. That a lot of types like us who think. And I used to talk to Alice about this almost 30 years ago. Thought

that there was an opening for a third force in America that would be fiscally conservative or market friendly and socially liberal, and that was wrong. What I learned from Trump was that it's the opposite.

What we thought, you know, some of the policy want types thought there was an opening for a Mike Bloomberg type. There was really an opening for someone who was culturally conservative and economically liberal. Trump ran on not touching social security and Medicare. Totally jettisoned the Paul Ryan, you know, entitlement reform agenda that had been a staple of the Republican elite class for so long.

He ran. Forget what he was able to do or could focus on. He ran on having better healthcare that was cheaper than Obama care. And I remember watching focus groups in his first year where that's what his voters expected him to do. Forget that he had no idea of, you know, how to wrestle with it. And it turned out it was a fiasco when they couldn't come together on any of it.

And so, that -- and I think that same dynamic is what's behind the politics driving a lot of Western Europe and the West because it is easier as a British political scientist, I'm a fan of named Matt Goodman. Who I commend you all. It is easier for the conservative parties to move left on economics than for the left parties to move right on culture. And I think that's what part of the U.S. problem right now. It's clearly what's driving politics across a lot of Europe.

And on that at least hopefully a provocative note, let me thank our terrific panel for stimulating this conversation. Hopefully, we can -- I was going to take a poll, a show of hands-on hope or doomed, but I think I should wait until after cocktails to do that. I'm going to read the outcome hopefully. So thank you all.

\* \* \* \* \*

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