

## [Transcript] The Realignment / 380 | Senator Marco Rubio: How America Can Recover from "Decades of Decadence"

Marshall here. Welcome back to the Realignment.

Hey, everyone. Welcome back to the show. Got a great guest and book today that needs very little introduction. Speaking with Florida Senator, Marco Rubio is making his return appearance on the Realignment. We already discussed his new book, Decades of Decadence, Power Spoiler Leads, Blue America's Inheritance of Liberty, Security and Prosperity. By the way, if you'd like to get more into the decadence topic and critique, definitely listen back to Sagar in my interviews with Floss Douthit about his 2020 book, which is all about decadence itself. Hope you all enjoy this conversation and quick network recording another one of our Q&A AMA episodes. So, if you'd like to get the full episode, go to [Realignment.Supercast.com](https://Realignment.Supercast.com) or click the link right in the show notes.

Huge thank you to the Foundation for American Innovation. We're working this podcast. Hope you'll enjoy the episode. Senator Marco Rubio, welcome back to the Realignment.

Thank you. Thanks for having me back. Yeah, it's great to have you back. We had you in 2020 and lots of things have happened between now and then. Let's just start with the very obvious things.

It's been a while since we had Ross Douthit on to talk about decadence, so listeners are going to refresh. What is decadence? I think decadence, obviously you can go to the dictionary version of it, but my view of it is this belief that we could do whatever we wanted, that things that have always mattered to every country, every society, every culture throughout human history didn't matter anymore, that somehow we could afford to drive public policy on the basis of theory completely unsupported by what 5,500 years of human history teaches us about human nature,

about reality, about truth. Decadence is pretending that the sun isn't going to rise in the east every day because somehow there's a group of people that now believes the sun should rise in the west. It's unfair to the east, but it's going to rise in the east whether you want it to or not. That's how we've made public policy in America, especially since the end of the Cold War. We thought that nation-state was over, that the idea that countries mattered would be replaced by our citizenship in this global economy, that place would no longer matter, that people no longer needed community in the traditional sense, that we would now find our community and our identity as consumers and investors and things of that nature. We got away with it for a long time to some extent because we were the only superpower in the world and America had enormous advantages. In essence, we got away with it because everyone else was messed up, but other countries didn't buy into that. They continued to make public policy on reality. They continued to make public policy on the basis of their best interests, often at our expense. Now we're facing the consequences. We are now reaping over 30 years, three decades of decadence in public policy and

quite frankly, culturally and in our society too. What breaks a country out of decadence?

Well, it's not a great answer. If you look at history, one of two things happens. The first is you don't break out and you collapse and have to rebuild yourself in some other form or fashion.

The other is existential conflict or crisis of some sort, something that brings everything into focus. If you think about it for a moment, an example, we don't hear a lot about Ukrainian politics these days. We don't hear a lot about their fissures and their society. We don't hear a lot about the woke movement, equity, all these sorts of concepts that are thrown around in the West. You know why you don't hear a lot about it? Because they have bombs dropped on their head

## [Transcript] The Realignment / 380 | Senator Marco Rubio: How America Can Recover from "Decades of Decadence"

and they're focused on that. And so I think, unfortunately, it's not what I'm rooting for, but generally the one or two things happens. You don't address it. You're not capable of addressing it. And so you collapse or decline and have to figure a way back up or not. I mean, that's how history is written. America is a relatively young country, 220 some just a little bit over two centuries, two and a quarter centuries, or you have some crisis that sort of puts everything into focus about what matters and what doesn't. And I'm hoping we can innovate a third route, which is that we sort of came face to face with reality and decided we don't want that. I'm hoping that America is still vibrant enough to be able to do that. That's certainly our goal. You know, I'm interested. A lot of people in the commentary at thought that COVID, just that specifically, not just like racial, just at a broad level, right? You know, you played a leading role in passing the Paycheck Protection Program, the Senate, Congress actually removed very quickly.

So people saw these said like, okay, this was the moment this was, you know, Ross doubt that's book being well timed to the narrative. Why didn't we break out of decadence three years later? Yeah, look, that's a good question. And obviously, I wasn't rooting for a global pandemic. And I think in the very, very early days of it, there was some dilemma that that's what would happen. Look, I mean, Congress passed a series of reforms in a divided Congress very quickly. I mean, something you would never be able to do a normal time. So you saw a little bit of that. But ultimately,

what we saw was that our politics, our decadence is had its roots are so deeply it's metastasized so deeply that even a pandemic became politicized, even a pandemic became politicized. And so it was almost immediately an us versus them scenario, you have a mask or you're not wearing a mask, you're vaccinated or you're not vaccinated, you're locking down or you're not locking down. And I think we forget, look, at the end of the day, I want to be fair here, we bound in the early couple weeks of this thing, nobody knew what it was. I mean, I knew people that, you know, today are anti vaccine or never wanted to take the vaccine. But in the early days, they were taking their clothes off and burning it in the garage every day when they came home, because nobody knew how this thing spread. But I think clearly, by two to three or four months into it, it was pretty clear this was an airborne situation. And there are things you could do outdoors that were safer and that at some point we had to go back to regular life. And then all of these dividing lines developed. And as these dividing lines developed, you know, they, they in many ways became almost like partisan politics and us versus them scenario. So it just shows you how deeply ingrained and this stuff is, let me make one more point, I don't want to give a tremendously long answer to this probably too late for that already. But I think we have more knowledge than we've ever had. Every one of our smart phones has with one tap away from basically having the equivalent of I don't know how many libraries of Congress basically almost all the information in the world is available to you so quickly. I think we have more knowledge than we've ever had. And I think we have less wisdom, if that makes any sense, you can have a bunch of knowledge, but, but wisdom is knowledge infused with common sense, with a moral code, with, you know, understanding human nature, understanding the lessons that people that came before us learn, you know, people before us invented the wheels. So we don't have to invent the wheel, that kind of thing. We have less wisdom than ever. And I think COVID revealed that in many cases. You know, you like most interesting people, you are defined by contradictions. Because on the one

## [Transcript] The Realignment / 380 | Senator Marco Rubio: How America Can Recover from "Decades of Decadence"

hand, you pointed out that things get really politicized. You yourself are someone who according to, you know, GovTrack and the Center for Effective Lawmaking are one of the most effective senators doing a particular hyper polarized one with our politics. But earlier in the episode, you kind of like dunked on DEI and all those things that I'm sure like your Senate Democratic colleagues would like object to. So help us understand the balance between the fact that you're going to have opinions on DEI woke categories, this, this, this or that. But there are also things like PPP that you actually want to pass. So just help us understand these contradictions and how they fit into your model. Well, it's one of the ironic things about the Senate. And it's one of the reasons why I support the filibuster is that you need 60 votes to pass things. And so what that means is that on any given day, you, you have to fight against someone on one issue, and then you turn around next week, and that person's an ally on something else. And there's only a hundred people. So you only have 99 other people that you need to know. And so in some ways, because of the Senate, because of its small size compared to the house, and because of those rules, you almost are forced to in many cases, not make permanent enemies out

of people. But what it strikes me is that that's in many ways the way our country was for a very long time. I mean, I grew up my entire life surrounded by people who, in many cases, I didn't even know their politics, because I can still remember when I had to beg people to care about politics. And they would maybe for like a couple of months before a presidential election, and they went back to life. Now everything has become political and hyper political outside, almost to the point where like, those of us who are in politics wish everything wasn't about politics everywhere you go, you know, people want to talk about something else. But I would say the other thing about it is we have lost the ability to interact with people, you know, people to people. And I think that that's what's happened now is our primary identity has become political. And we really don't know each other because a lot of the institutions that we once had to interact inside of, you know, we were the same, we didn't agree on politics, but our kids played together in the same team or went to the same church or what have you. And so you have to figure out a way to live alongside people that might have different opinions. And in the process, it helps shape your opinions and keeps you away from sort of viewing people in this tribal or we had different

kinds of tribe productive types of tribes in that sense. I think we've lost that, right? We become more isolated from one another. And oftentimes the first and only thing we know about somebody else

is who they voted for or who their politics, what their politics are and what have you. And so I think that I think that's been a big factor that I've tried to always fight against. But look, it's hard. It really is hard because that doesn't mean that's the way other people are going to treat or judge you. And it is human instinct at some point to say, you know what, you know, these are people I can't work with. I think the Senate, we've largely kind of worried that sometimes because there's so few people, but you know, that's changing too, I think a little bit. So I guess what's interesting here is you're suggesting that maybe Representative Rubio would not be able to balance the dynamics I was asking about the same way because at an institutional, structural level, they're different. In terms of in the Senate, like in terms like this, because you're saying like, I was in the house,

## [Transcript] The Realignment / 380 | Senator Marco Rubio: How America Can Recover from "Decades of Decadence"

yeah, yeah, through the house, it seems like it would be harder than to hold your position on like DEI issues, but then also work on PPP, basically. No, I think in the house, right. I mean, I think in the house, it still happens to some extent. Again, it's, but it's, you know, you have four times as many people, more than four times as many people. So I just think oftentimes many house members don't even know the other house members. I think that's part of it. I think part of it is they have to run every two years. Many of the members in both parties run in districts that are going to be decided in primaries, not general elections. But I always remind people of something. I think that we get this backwards, you know, our political process is a mirror. Our political process produces what our culture wants, not the other way around. Our politics reflects our culture. And so when we please see things happening in politics, whether it's the way people talk, treat each other, express themselves or approach it, you are in essence reflecting back what society and culture is demanding at that moment. Our politics is a reflection of our culture, not the creation of it, and not public policies relevant, obviously. But what you see on a daily basis in politics really reflects the culture more than shapes it. Something I'm curious about too, to ask a personal question, you're telling this story of 30 years of post-Cold War decadence, end of history, France, Fukuyama, all those good things. What's interesting to me about you, though, is that you were an elected member of the Florida Legislature during the 2000s. So unlike most people of your age cohort, when you're talking about the 2000s in the 1990s, you, I mean, once again, I'm not alleging that you at all, or even the Florida Legislature, were responsible for decadence. That's a much bigger topic. But what were you thinking in 2005, 2006, 2007, back during that moment? You know what I mean? Yeah. So a couple of things. First of all, I wasn't talking the way I am today because I didn't know this thing. I learned over the last 15 years from running from president to raising four children to just daily life, and the world has changed. But I recall very clearly in the mid-2000s, in the Florida Legislature, openly saying, our competition is not Mississippi or Alabama, our competition is India and China, meaning education, and what we were teaching our kids in curriculum reform to step up to the fact that we were now engaged in global competition with other countries for the best jobs, technologies, and the like. So there was some inkling of that already in place. I tell people all the time, look, I was raised and came up through a political culture on the center right that was defined by sort of that post-Cold War era, whether it's the world, you know, you talk about the early 2000s, where to be a Republican met, we were going to go into Afghanistan and we were going to go into Iraq. Most Republicans supported that. Certainly, Afghanistan had a lot of support across the board, Iraq a little bit more conflictive over time, but nonetheless, the war on terror, the 2008 meltdown of our economy because of the decisions made at the market with the mortgages and derivatives and the like, and then so, I mean, I'm a prod, you know, I don't mean to pick on one organization, but I was a product of, in many ways, that's, you know, what you heard from all the groups that supported Republicans, where all the think tanks were about, I mean, that's where it all came from. And I think what really began to, if you can see, certainly by 2013 or 2014, you know, I start talking about things that, frankly, today, I just read something that day about accreditation reform, right, that everybody's now talking about. These are creditors that tell you which colleges, degrees matter, which ones don't, we need to open that up, maybe even we shouldn't require college degrees, there should be an alternative way to get the same learning.

## [Transcript] The Realignment / 380 | Senator Marco Rubio: How America Can Recover from "Decades of Decadence"

I wrote a book about that in 2014, so you can start to see, as I got exposed to more parts of the country, and a bigger sort of, you know, your view of the world is a lot broader when you're in the Senate than when you're in the state legislature, where you're focused on state issues, and then what really sort of put it in the hyperdrivers running for president, that it changed me in a positive way because it exposed me to people and places that I had never seen or heard before. I went out there as this product of the American dream, incredibly optimistic, both of my parents, immigrants, working class, service sector jobs, and I'm sitting in the United States Senate running for president, I'm like, this is a great country, anything's possible, and you run into people from the same country, the United States, who are saying to you, well, that's not been my experience, you know, my father and my grandfather worked at that factory, and now, you know, that this town has gutted, you know, and all these empty places that was once so vibrant and thriving are gone, and people are angry about it, that that had been ignored, and I, we don't have a rust belt in Florida, like, I just never interacted with that, so that's the first thing, and the second thing is, I was also exposed to this divide, I would say in our country, but also in a Republican party, I would go to these events during the day, town halls and the like, some part of the country, Iowa, New Hampshire, even South Carolina, and I would hear those stories, I just outlined, and then I would go in the evening, sometimes I'd get on a plane and fly, I don't know, New York, or whatever, and do a fundraiser, and it's just completely different priorities and experience, and these weren't evil people, but they were doing good in the global economy, they were doing good in the new economy, and what they were upset about is that Republicans talked too much about culture issues, and wanted us just to focus on lower taxes and less regulations, letting the market work out, and so that to me was really like, wow, there's a big divide here between our voting base and our donor base, and those are things that you can only learn by seeing, and you can't read a book about it or anything like that, you can watch this podcast and learn all about it, I guess. I guess the question is, your point about Florida not having a Rust Belt is kind of a fascinating to actually think about it, like it's an inherently optimistic story of, you know, bend to events with, you know, Mayor Suarez, and he's talking like Miami, and like, the fact that, you know, there's so many Cuban immigrants, and it's very, very positive, that's the opposite in many respects from the deindustrialization, like 1980s plus story. So another thing that's different between 2014 and today is that the Republican Party seems very much defined by Florida. There was a big competition during the 2010s, Texas, Florida, I'm in Texas right now, but right now the party, you know, senators like you, Ron DeSantis, President Trump, all, you know, are from Florida, like what does it mean for Florida to be at the center of the conservative movement right now? Well, I think it's an exciting opportunity. I think it's important to understand our country is a very diverse country, you know, and I think when you get out there, and I think Governor DeSantis will learn this now as well, if he doesn't

## [Transcript] The Realignment / 380 | Senator Marco Rubio: How America Can Recover from "Decades of Decadence"

know it already, as he gets out there, is that, you know, some of the issues in Iowa are very different from things you face in Florida. Now, the one thing about Florida is it's itself, and people don't realize Florida has a very large, substantial agriculture industry, which is under tremendous duress. It obviously has a very vibrant service sector. It has a growing defense and aerospace contracting sector, you know, tourism and travel, real estate construction. I mean, there are a lot of industries represented here. We were never a big factory state that had, you know, what you would find in Ohio and the Upper Midwest and things of that nature. But nonetheless, we have that. So I do think it's important to recognize those differences, but Florida itself has real challenges. Let me say this, and it's not as Florida's fault, it's just the way it is. My parent's story, I'm very proud of. My dad was a bartender. Last job he had was a bartender, and then he was a crossing guard after he retired in school, but he didn't want to stop working. My mom, Cashier, Stock Clerk, made at a hotel in Las Vegas, when they owned a home. We had a car. We didn't have everything we wanted, but we had everything we needed. There's no way that a bartender and a maid, or a bartender and a Stock Clerk at Kmart today, could afford to buy a home in Miami, much less live the life with them. It's just not possible. The map tells you that, and that's been true for a while. I think that's been one of the big changes. I think Florida is really on the front lines of that, and that is we face those same challenges. So it's great that all these people are moving down here, they're moving their hedge funds here. I think that's all fantastic. But the health of your economy is not determined by how many rich people you have, and I'm not against rich people. The health of your economy is determined by can you, A, provide the things your country needs so that you're not dependent on some foreign power, and can you create good paying jobs for people that sustain families and community? Because if you don't have good paying jobs, you can't have strong families, and you can't have strong communities. And if you don't have strong families and strong communities, I don't care how good the people you elect are, your country will not flourish. It cannot flourish. Those are the basic building blocks of any society. The way you just told that story gets at the central issue, I think facing huge parts of the right, and even parts of the center left too, which is you yourself are calling for policies that could help us have another, a new American century. But to your point, there are people who literally just can't even succeed at a basic domestic local level. What does a new American century mean to people? And I believe in that rhetoric very much. I believe in that idea, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. But what does that mean to people who can't afford housing and afford the dream? Do you know what I mean? Like at least last time, the American century was correlated with Ford and GM in the 1950s, put aside race for a second. But how are people, when you talk to people, right? How do they react to that? Well, and that's a big challenge, right? I mean, and so look, I think it's important that rhetoric be backed up. You can describe it at the end with phraseology, but you got to really tell people what I mean. I actually don't think human beings are nuanced and they can be complex and complicated. Obviously, we're very different. Everybody's very different. But there's some basic things that I think align for the most part. And that is everyone generally, for the most part,

wants some people want to be incredibly successful at something and be at the top of their profession and have that level of ambition. But the overwhelming majority of people, what they want are some pretty basic things. They want to have a good paying job that provides them enough money so they can do, they have the time and the finances to do the things that make life worth living. And what are those things? And as you get older, you appreciate them more, giving your kids opportunities to do all the things you never could, being able to enjoy doing the things you like to do when you're not working. You don't want to work to be able to live and enjoy all these sorts of things. Whatever it is important in your life, whether it's your faith, whether it's what you do in the community, whether it's what you do in the memories you form and shape your family. But that's pretty essential. And right now, for a lot of people, it's very, very difficult. They can't do it. Why? Well, because the jobs that allow you, the very basics are not, the stress involved alone and trying to figure out, how am I going to pay a mortgage, my insurance bills, we have an insurance crisis in Florida, it's crazy. I mean, it's just nuts. I mean, it doubled, almost doubled my home insurance last year. I don't even want to know, I'm dreading it now, what's going to come next year, auto insurance rates are high in some of our markets. These kinds of things just drain people to the point where it makes it, people start to make, I mean, I've had people come up to me and say, I can't afford to have kids. When you're in a society that's saying, I cannot afford to have children, you're now in a really very dangerous moment. So I think a new American century is not about going back to the 1950s or 60s, but there are things about that era that I think can have a 21st century version of them, like strong community. That's why I like doing podcasts. My answer's not to be in 20 seconds. Yeah, you know, run on Fox, you could do whatever you need to do here. Here's the thing that came to mind. You keep reading about this crisis of loneliness. I'm going to be talking more about this about young teens. Do you think about it? Okay, young Americans today, if you're 16, 20, 21, 25, you are the most highly educated generation in American history. More of them have gone to college, more of them have graduated high school. They're just the most highly educated, living in the most still the best place in the world as evidenced by hundreds of thousands of people that try to come in every month to this country illegally. Okay. And yet somehow we have these surging rates of suicide, of depression, and a sense of loneliness. And there's a lot of causes for it. But one that I found very interesting was a medium post. And I wish I had it with me was the decline of youth sports. And I've seen that firsthand, the decline of youth sport. A lot of people say, well, that's the decline of youth sports is because parents are mean to the referees, which is true. I've seen that and it's out of control. Or because of travel ball costs so much money. And it's true parents are spending thousands of dollars a year to take their, I've done the volleyball circuit. We never did soccer or baseball. We did football and track with the boys and a little bit of basketball. And for the girls, it was volleyball and cheerleading. But it's true, there is some of that divide. But the core of it is this, that little league that used to be in some community that sort of brought people together, that's not, doesn't exist anymore. And it's not just travel ball that killed it. It's the organization no longer exists because the people that once volunteered their time to work there, don't live in that community anymore. Those people in order to be able to volunteer to coach had to have a job that allowed them after five o'clock to go out there and be able to do that. They had to have that level of stability in the community. You had to

## [Transcript] The Realignment / 380 | Senator Marco Rubio: How America Can Recover from "Decades of Decadence"

have community sponsors, small businesses who made enough money to support and sustain those organizations. That's just a small scale example of what we have lost. And no Facebook group, no Instagram, none of that is ever going to replace community. Human beings by nature have a desire to belong. Anywhere you put humans, the first thing they do is figure out, where can I belong? What group can I belong to? What organization can I belong to? Whatever. At any setting, from prison to college, you put people somewhere and immediately they try to figure out where they belong. And if you don't give them productive things to belong to, or positive things to belong to, they will belong to negative things, or suddenly your identity becomes the color of your skin, how you define your gender, or your sexual preference, or who you voted for in the last election. That becomes your identity. And in many cases, your only identity or your organizing identity in life. So your question was about the numeric and centric. I wish we need to get back to stability in our society, on an economic front, for example, so that we can have those institutions that allow people to belong to positive organizations that bring you in contact with people different from you, so we can once again create a sense of community and a sense of country. Yeah, and just quick note before we get into the last five minutes. Yeah, I want to call out the medium post. The Wall Street Journal had some great reporting on the decline of youth sports.

It's kind of funny, like I'm 31. So I grew up with like the, we have too many participation trophies discourse. And if you actually just look into the issue now, the actual issues, there's not even enough kids participating in sports to have a participation trophy problem. So that's like, it's not fun, but that's like an interesting 2000s versus 2020s discourse problem. Okay, so in four minutes, I need you to the following. What do we do? You know what I mean? Like we've, we've, there are, you know, left, right and center versions of this decadence critique. They come from different directions, but the broad narrative that people would share is it feels like we're a country in decline. You're not going to give us like the four talking point solutions here, obviously, but just how, how do you think about addressing this moving forward, solving amusing quotation marks for those who are listening? Well, I think the first piece is we have to recognize that we have a problem and that sounds cliché-ish, but you really do because if you don't, you have to define the problem correctly, your solution. I mean, if you, if you diagnose the wrong disease, you're not going to cure the right disease. I mean, because you have to understand what the fundamental challenge is here. And our fundamental challenges, our economy is incredibly vulnerable. I don't care what GDP shows, we have an economy that's built on finance and services. China has an economy that's built on manufacturing. Russia has an economy that's built on raw material. And in a moment of crisis, when it all comes down, what's going to matter more? How many bankers and movie screenwriters do we have and Uber drivers or what's, or who can produce wheat, who can produce fertilizer, who can produce energy, who can make things? So I think we have to understand that our economy cannot solely be judged by GDP. We have to judge by the content of it as well. A bag of chips may have the same number of calories as some vegetables, but which one's better for you, right? So that's the first. Then the second is we have to recognize we made a big mistake here. Yes, we're not, I don't want to isolate it from the world, and we most certainly want to continue to interact and



## [Transcript] The Realignment / 380 | Senator Marco Rubio: How America Can Recover from "Decades of Decadence"

trade with other countries, have people travel here, travel there and all of that. But at the end of the day, our public policy, the number one objective of American public policy needs to be the best interest of America before everything else. That's not in America only, but it is an American, it is important for, we don't look out for our best interest, no one else will. And that forces those in my party on the center right to say, okay, generally we want the free, I hate socialism, I think it's a failure. So we want the market outcome because the market is always going to generate, it's going to drive investment to the most efficient outcome. But what happens when the most efficient outcome is not good for your country? What happens is it's more efficient to make all these medicines in China, but it's not good for America to depend on China for all our medicine, as we see now from our shortages. And so it is important for us to do that. And we have to understand this is not just about military issues, it's not just about we've got to be able to build our own weapons. Our security depends on much more than simply how many planes and tanks and ships we can build. It is also based on do we have, can you be a great power and not be an industrial power? Can you have a healthy economy that isn't creating good paying jobs? Because as I believe that we all have an obligation, every able-bodied person has an obligation to work. But we also have to have an economy that has an obligation to produce that work. You can't demand people work if you're not producing good paying jobs for them that can sustain family and community. So there's a lot of public policy that we're going to have to delve into. We've offered a lot, but there are more that I think will come in the years to come but it really begins by defining the problem in that way and understanding that we are at a sort of a linchpin moment where I think the 21st century will be defined by the decisions we're going to make over the next five to 10 years. And my biggest fear is not that we won't make it. My biggest fear is that we will take too long. We will be too patient with it. And we've already wasted too much time. We have to operate with some sense of urgency and seriousness here. But here's the promise. I think this moment has the promise to realign a lot of our politics. Not get rid of partisanship, but redefine it. You're already starting to see it. And I think that it creates some strange bedfellows on some issues, but certainly move us away from a sort of outdated aligned traditional center-right paradigm to a new center-right paradigm that I think will allow us to create a governing coalition in our country that we haven't had now for 20 years. So last actual question, since I know you're on a tight schedule, so take as long as you need or as short as you need to answer this. When you're bringing up loneliness and community social media, where are you on all of this social media ban discourse? It's just sort of like blown up recently. Yeah, so well, I put TikTok in a different category from everybody else. And the reason being is that TikTok, it's not the videos on there. Okay, it's not some booty video or people I don't think these are positive things, but again, that's a reflection of our culture. TikTok doesn't create those videos to people. It's not the content per se. And it's not even the data, it's the algorithm. And I'll tell you why that matters, because no matter who owns TikTok or TikTok US, what powers it, the engine that makes TikTok TikTok is the algorithm, the recommender engine. And that's owned by ByteDance. And under Chinese law, that can never be sold, that can never

## [Transcript] The Realignment / 380 | Senator Marco Rubio: How America Can Recover from "Decades of Decadence"

be exported. And that only works with access to data. So it doesn't matter who even owns the data. If that data isn't shared with ByteDance, then TikTok won't work. So they have to share it with ByteDance. And if you're sharing it with ByteDance, you're sharing it with engineers that are sitting in China that have to do whatever the Chinese Communist Party tells them. To me, that poses an extraordinary national security risk for the country now and in the future. And that's why I put them aside. I'm not a fan of everything social media does. There are real dangers associated with it. And like any innovation throughout the history of the world, we never had motor vehicle accidents and drunk drivers until we invented the car. When you innovate, there are positives and negatives, and there are negatives associated with social media. And so I think this is something,

I don't have a perfect answer to it, they're going to have to work our way through. But I think it really begins with the acknowledgement that sitting in front of a screen all day and consuming video is not all positive. It's not all positive. And there are real negatives attached to it as well.

And then somehow having some consciousness that that stuff, to some extent, isn't real.

But much of what you see on social media, even political stuff on social media, does not reflect reality. It is an exaggerated version of reality. That doesn't mean the things on there are faker, didn't happen. But exaggerate, we have to have some semblance of balance. And that says you have to live most of your life in the real world, not in whatever the social media world. So I think we're still struggling with that as a society, but we are a free society. We are a place where people are free to make these decisions. And with freedom comes extraordinary responsibility, because it goes back to what I said, now you have to have strong families and strong communities that are able to sort of help people balance all this. Because in the absence of strong families and strong communities, then all of the power is in the hands of algorithms who, frankly, have no basis for which to encourage positive human behavior, because it's an algorithm. It's just going to encourage whatever behavior you like, it's just going to encourage more.

Well said. Senator Rubio, thank you so much for joining me again on The Realignment.

Thank you so much. And I encourage people to buy my book, Decades of Decadence, that I think you'll find interesting.

Hope you enjoyed this episode. If you learned something like this sort of mission or want to access our subscriber exclusive Q&A, bonus episodes and more, go to [realignment.supercast.com](https://realignment.supercast.com) and subscribe to our \$5 a month, \$50 a year, or \$500 for a lifetime membership. Thanks. See you all next time.