Hey, it is Ezra. We're doing a Rear today, but it's one of my favorite episodes and one that I think has particular relevance right now. Given the stress that politicians like Donald Trump place on political systems, what is the nature of their appeal? This conversation with Pippa Norris, getting at her theory of it, is, I think, particularly compelling because it isn't just about Donald Trump because it puts Donald Trump and politicians like him in a global context, where we can look for similarities and see perhaps a little bit more deeply what is going on in the electorates that power them. Take a listen. I'm Ezra Klein. This is The Ezra Klein Show.
It's easy to look at American politics as aberration right now. It's comforting and a way. Maybe the whole problem, the whole question is Donald Trump and the unique magnetism and attributes he brings to modern politics. I mean, Trump has many things, but one thing he is is distinctive. Once a billionaire or maybe billionaire developer, known for being a businessman, a celebrity reality TV star forever in the tabloids with an unerring sense of what will get people's attention, who is somehow immune to the disciplining force of shame. Maybe that's a story right there, the particular package of attributes Donald Trump brings to all this. And then you have the weird dimension of American institutions, a Republican party that he was able to take over in part due to our weird way of doing primaries and the electoral college and the way we distribute power. So it's easy to step back from that and think, something's just wrong with America. Why are we taken in by this guy? But maybe nothing's wrong with America or at least nothing specific. Look at Joe Biden. Joe Biden may be polling in the low 40s and people can come up with all kinds of explanations for that. But that's better than other G7 leaders right now. In Canada, Justin Trudeau also in the low 40s. In France, Emmanuel Macron, upper 20s. In Germany, Olaf Schultz also in the 20s. In the UK, Liz Truss was at 9% when she resigned as Prime Minister. And she resigned mere months after Boris Johnson had also resigned
as Prime Minister. Nor is the Republican party's ongoing competitiveness or turn towards a more reactionary, subversive message, all that unusual. Italy just elected a far-right prime minister from a party with fascist roots. In France, Marine Le Pen, the far-right leader, she won around 40% of the vote in the final round of their presidential elections.
Doing better than she did in 2017. In Sweden, I mean, Sweden, a hard-right group founded by neo-Nazis and skinheads won the second highest number of seats in parliament in elections earlier this year. In Brazil, Bolsonaro lost on Sunday. I mean, Bolsonaro is about as Trump-y a figure you will find outside of the Trump family. So it's a big deal. But he won 49% of the vote. 49%. It's hardly a resounding rejection of what he stood for or how he governed the country.
And that's just a partial list. The rise of these right-wing populist parties and politicians is happening in many countries in many contexts. It's coming in wealthy countries and poor ones, in places with high levels of immigration and low levels, in countries with a lot of economic inequality and much lower inequality. This is not just an American dilemma, not just a French one, not just a Swedish one or Brazilian one. And so we need theories that explain more than one country or more than one situation. Which brings me to Pippa Norris. She is a comparative political scientist at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. And in 2019, she and her co-author, the late Ron Engelhardt, published what I've come to see as a really crucial text for thinking about the rise of global populist authoritarians. It's called Cultural Backlash, and I asked her on the show this week to explain it. As always, my email as her client show at nytimes.com.

Pippa Norris, welcome to the show. Thank you so much, Esra. Pleasure to be here.
Tell me about the silent revolution in cultural values.
So this is very much part of the legacy of Ron Engelhardt, who we sadly lost from the University of Michigan. He was observing what was happening in the 1970s. That's how he started his work. And he went to Paris and saw people on the streets, young people, workers, everybody out demonstrating and protesting. And then he looked around, in particular, Washington, where again the anti-Vietnam movement was going, and also in Tokyo, where there were also protests in London. And he said something is going on, and it's a younger generation in particular, and the college educated who are leading the charge along with an alliance of workers and other groups. And his prediction was that in the 1940s and 50s, as countries emerged from the Second World War, in particular in Western Europe and in post-industrial societies, there was a basic sense that what was
important there was materialism. In other words, growth, economic goods, better housing, better welfare states, making sure there were pensions and national health services, and those sorts of things. And particularly amongst the generation that went through the war, our parents and our grandparents, those who suffered from the great recession and depression, the instability of Hitler, Mussolini, and all the changes involved with the rise of fascism, the Second World War, which disrupted lives. In that context, people wanted security. That was their priority. And they would join, for example, trade unions in order to negotiate better wages if they were in blue color work. And they would increasingly buy their houses and try and get economic prosperity if they were middle class, professional teachers, people like that. The younger generation, however, that subsequently grew up, in particular those who lived in their early years in the 60s and 70s, had a very different set of experiences. They could take for granted that there was a certain level of economic prosperity. Remember, there was technology that was taking off in that era. There were blue
color workers who were increasing their wage packets. People could afford the nice things in life and they could go to college, which was a major revolution throughout Europe. As a result, they started to prioritize other things. And this is exemplified by the new social movements, thinking the 60s and 70s. And so it wasn't just sex that was being invented, according to many observers, but many other things, the environmental movement, for example, and protests about climate change. There were changes in terms of protests about nuclear weapons and the old idea of military strength and defense. And there was movements in particular for women in order to get women's equality, the second wave women's movement, and of course, the rise of the LGBTQ movement as well. And all of these, Ron basically said, were part of a single pattern. And they led to new parties. And in particular, what he predicted in that period was that this generation that was concerned with what he termed post-material issues, the quality of life,
the ways in which we can improve our living standards, took for granted material affluence.
And so they moved on to other issues and other values, which they regarded as much more important,
in particular freedom and autonomy, the ability to live your own life and to enjoy diverse lifestyles, to enjoy gender fluidity, for example, not simply fix gender roles or fix sex roles in the family.
It became much more of a secular focus rather than religion, much more of a cosmopolitan focus rather than one that was based on nationalism or nativism. And so a generation grew up. And you

can
think about the hippies and a wide range of other movements around that period that challenged traditional values. Now, the silent revolution was such because it was a gradual process. It wasn't one which produced that many changes that were that visible, but it was one that gradually, rather like a rat in a python, went through the population. As the older generations died out gradually just through natural causes, as they were replaced by their children and their younger generations, so values in society as a whole started to change. And that cultural cleavage, that basic division, started to be apparent in parties and in the issues that were being debated in politics as well. And so the old left-right cleavage between socialist parties, social democrats, labour parties on the left, in favour of high levels of public spending, generous welfare states, and probably moderate to high taxation to a non-galitarian system on the one side. And on the other side, the conservatives, the Christian democrats, and other parties who are European liberals, who favoured fiscal prudence, low taxation, and low public spending. That basic economic cleavage was no longer as important as the emerging cultural cleavage over a wider range of new issues. And again, you can think about America as an example of this. And so think back to the 1960s and 70s, and you have those like, for example, Nixon, who were actually fairly liberal on many issues towards women and child care and welfare policies, and indeed the Republican Party at that time, many were in favour of reproductive rights and abortion. And on the left, you had Democrats, particularly those who were socially liberal in progressive areas, as well as Democrats who are more conservative from the solid south. And so the new cleavage started to remake political parties, party competition, and the issues which were critical in elections and campaigning and so on. So the silent revolution was a fundamental change in the basic level of society, which percolated up and gradually produced new issues, new parties, and new party leaders as well.

Walk me through a couple of the pieces of evidence you find strongest here. If you were looking for, let's call it, three data points that in the way they shifted from, you know, 1950 to 2020 or 1970 to 2020, that show the way politics has changed. What would they be?

So we can think of the key issues. One would be something like women's equality and the idea that you remember after the Second World War, people went back to their traditional lifestyles in the middle of the war. They were Rosie the Riveter and women were engaged in heavy industry, reducing the bombs. Immediately afterwards, in the 1950s, we had real constraints and think about Betty Frudan, for example, and the way that she described the role of housewives at that time. But in the 60s and 70s, when civil rights in America was taking off and when feminism was taking off, basically the women were saying, look, we're actually being excluded from some of these new social movements. We need to demand equal pay. And of course, at that time, there were major developments in things like equal pay acts and sex discrimination acts in many liberal democracies, as well as in the United States. And gradually, the idea that women should have an equal role in management, in the professions, and that there should be much more flexible sex roles in the home, that came to be accepted. That's normal. That's pretty much widely accepted in most of the established liberal democracies. Second trend, in similar ways, much more secular, but secularization, the decline of religion. And again, with Ron Engelhardt, I wrote a book on that sacred and secular. And as increasing security came about,

so religion no longer seemed to be as important in people's lives. And you can see that through church going, but you can also see that in terms of religious identifications. And it particularly started in the earlier decades amongst the Protestants in Europe, which had been the established church, of course, in many places, and where the church was gradually emptied out. But it gradually also then affected the Catholic church, and that was accelerated by changes and scandals within the Catholic hierarchy. So sexualization is a dramatic change. It starts at different levels in different countries. In fact, the United States was rather late to come to this trend, but it's clearly going on. If you look, for example, at Gallup or Pew. But in most West European countries, you can look at the Eurobarometer, you can look at Pew Surveys, you can look at the World Value Survey, and the proportion who see themselves as religious shrinks and shrinks over successive decades. In particular, what's left is the older populations who still to some extent attend church in Europe. But it's a very small minority now on a regular basis. By the way, people still often have a religious identity. If you ask them, they will say, for example, I'm Methodist or I'm Catholic or whatever their religious faith is. But it's no longer vital to their lives in the way it might have been in earlier decades. And then as well as that, we can think of other issues like climate change and the environment. And again, it was a small group with the silent spring. It was a small group who was concerned about recycling and very, very minor support for green parties who were often not able to break into Parliament in the 60s and 70s. But it gradually took off until nowadays, of course, it's one of the key issues of our time. If you look at the most important problem in most countries, as we've seen from the headlines in today's papers from the UN report, everybody is aware of the consequences. Everybody is living through the consequences of climate change. And so again, that is a major development which has altered our politics and also society as a whole and our basic attitudes towards social values, what we think is important for us, our families, our governments and our country. There's something that you touched on briefly that I've come to think of as much more important here than people recognize, which is that this is generational, that this change in values was not a process of persuasion, equally distributed across society, where you convinced 40% of the baby boomers and 40% of Gen Xers and 40% of millennials, but that it is success of generations showing sharply different views about politics and cultural questions and what is important in life than each other. Talk to me a bit about that process and distinction.
So generational change is a really powerful force. It's like a tide which is moving in a single direction. And where a generation changes, we're saying it's not a life cycle effect. A life cycle is, for example, an attitude that you might be saying more liberal when you're younger. And then as you settle down, get married, have kids, have a house, you might get more conservative and then maybe more conservative in later years as well as you retire. But this is a different idea. This is that you get your formative values and attitudes and norms, the basic things that you think are important in life when you're in your socialization process. And that's during your formative years. So in childhood, and in your adolescence, and as you start to enter the workforce, often, for example, the first party that you vote for in the past used to be the party that you would continue with. And these values are things which you learned from different role models. And so it could be teachers and schools and classmates. It could be your family and your neighbors and your community. And it could be values at the level of your society. And those values then stick with you in later life. You become much less fluid. You don't really adapt

nearly so much once you're in your 30s, your 40s and so on. So young people growing up in the interwar years at a time of austerity, at a time of incredible economic uncertainty, poverty, think about the Dust Bowl region in the United States, think about the lines for unemployment in Western Europe. Think about the disruption of Germany after the war. In all of those cases, when you grew up
in those circumstances, you prioritized security. You prioritized stability. You wanted often a strong leader who can provide you with order and economic growth, that basic idea. But for the younger generation, they could take those things for granted. And often, by the way, Ron Engelhardt took on the idea from Maslow of a hierarchy of values. And Maslow thought of this as an individual where you had various basic physical needs, water, food, security, etc. Once you fulfill those, you can go on to other needs such as those for aesthetic life or other types of recognition or status. And what Ron did and what was so brilliant in his early work, which he published in 1977, on the silent revolution, was to apply that not to individuals, but to societies. So if somebody grew up, for example, in Sweden, in those era of the 1960s and 70s, their lifestyle, the things they took for granted, the values that were imbued from that were very liberal, very much ones of social tolerance, social trust, a belief in the state and the state should run things in terms of public services, that was taken for granted. But the idea also of a confidence that their lives weren't just within a country, but were cosmopolitan, that they could be part of Europe and had a European
identity, they could work and live and travel in many places. And their lifestyles were just very, very different to their parents who in turn were very different to their grandparents. And as the older generation, as I said, gradually declined in terms of the population, still very important as a group, still, by the way, voting very highly. But as they were gradually replaced in the population by the younger generation, so values in society changed overall. Think about things like attitudes towards gay marriage again, even as recently as Obama, people didn't really talk seriously about the idea of legalising marriage equality. And now in many, many countries it's taken for granted. Think about issues of, say, marijuana and that use, which was liberalised first in many European countries, like the Netherlands, and is now, of course, increasingly available throughout the US states and is taxed like alcohol and sand. So values and attitudes and lifestyles changed on a generational basis, as younger people became gradually more secure in their formative years, and as older people gradually died out as a proportion of the population.

This can feel upon hearing it almost like a tidal pattern. Of course, every generation is more liberal, more tolerant, more open than the one that came before it. But a point you and the late Ron Inglehart make in your work is that this isn't true, certainly not at this speed. Can you talk a bit about the way this generational change we've seen has been different than what has been the norm throughout history? Yes. In particular, it can, as you say, seem like a deterministic theory of modernisation, which is rather outdated. If you look around the world, you see different paces of change. But nevertheless, it is a broad, as it were, a Gulf stream moving in one direction, but it can move back and forward. And clearly those who are carried in these powerful forces can also move back and forward, depending on circumstances. So, for example, think about the economic crisis of 2008. Suddenly, people who had bought their own homes found themselves not able to afford the mortgages. Young people who might have assumed that they could easily get a job once they finished college, or if they just left school, found immediately there was

high levels of unemployment. And a lot of people who thought that they were safely middle class suddenly found themselves moving backwards, that their pensions or their savings no longer really meant what they thought they had. And so you can, for a time, have a period effect in which the whole of society is suddenly pushed backwards, either economically, or think again about 9-11, and the way in which that made Americans suddenly feel a genuine sense of insecurity from terrorism. So, events matter. Generational changes are long-term. Events are short-term period effects. But again, we would expect a period effect to have a short term, as it were, blip. So, everybody in that society might move back towards demanding economic growth if there's a recession, or cutbacks in inflation, as we now see when prices are rising so much for groceries, or changes in security or changes in their attitudes towards immigrants when new events come onto the stage. But it doesn't still change the differences between the older generations and the younger generations. You can think of it almost like a layer cake. Everybody might move back towards demanding a different role for government and greater security at that time,
depending on the natural threat as perceived. But still, the older generation tends to be the ones that is the most socially conservative, and the younger generation are the ones which tend to be the most liberal. We've been talking a lot about the younger generations and how they're changing, how they're becoming more post-materialist, more culturally liberal. But I also want to talk
about that other group, the older generation, because these shifts are happening generationally, and that leaves a whole segment of the population who are or at least feel themselves to be left behind by these trends. So, tell me about that group and how they've been reacting.
So, again, in the 1950s, things which were central to people's identity, like patriotism and nationalism towards one's country, issues of religion and belief in God,
and that the church played a central role in people's lives, attitudes towards marriage and the family and children within that traditional unit, attitudes towards what it meant to be an American or what it meant to be Swedish or what it meant to be British, all of those things were seen by many of the older generations and the socially conservatives to be under threat. They were no longer the 60% of the population adhering to those values. They were no longer the 50%, instead, in society as a whole, as liberalism gradually expanded, they found themselves to be increasingly in minority. And so, those views, which were very much led by younger, college-educated and other social progressive groups in society, were really fundamental social shifts. But what Ron Inglehart's Silent Revolution theory had neglected to really emphasize at the time was that many people lost out from these developments. Many people felt that the things which they took for granted, the things which they regarded as important for themselves and their community and their country, those things were being lost. And as a result, you saw increasing support for what we term in our book, authoritarian populist parties. And this is a group which you can call them radical right, that's a very common way of labelling them, but they're not always right-wing in economics. Sometimes they're fairly positive towards public spending, for example, in Scandinavian countries. What distinguishes them is that they really want to restore and push back against social liberalism, or as we call it in the contemporary parlance in the media, the woke agenda. And so, you can see many countries which have got the parties who've been standing up for many traditional values. For example, on welfare, if you look in France,

in Italy, in Sweden, many authoritarian populist parties, the Sweden Democrats, the brothers of Italy, or the National Front or National Rallyers, they're now known in France, all of these parties in particular push back on the diversity which comes from immigration, but they also have a larger agenda. They also push back sometimes on issues which concern reproductive rights and so anti-abortion
laws, for example, which were passed, say, in Poland. They also push back on LGBTQ and the rights of those groups, and particularly transsexual rights is something which has been a bit noir for many of these parties. And they also push back on globalization and thus the European Union, and so they really want to restore national borders and nativism benefits for those who are born in the country, rather than having the diversity which has come about through increasing waves of immigration and the liberal values which have been the result of generational changes. So these parties are the parties which have been growing in votes, growing in seats, sometimes entering government in European countries, and really changing the nature of European politics in remarkable ways. I want to sit in this for a minute because I want to try to spend some time on the psychology of this political tendency, which I don't think we describe well. And let me try something on you. I think there's one level of it that is very easy to see in polling, and so those of us who look at a lot of polling tend to fixate there. So you'll see that attitudes on immigration are very related to, say, support for Donald Trump or some of these other parties in Europe and will say, okay, it's an anti-immigrant right. Or there's just a set of polls that came out today that I saw from the pollster Perry Undham showing that opinions on Black Lives Matter are extraordinarily predictive in America, of which party you're going to vote for, as you can begin to assemble a set of policy ideas. So maybe we'll call that level one.
And then there is this sort of backlash level that you're talking about, which is this sense that you are losing power, that the world is being changed against you, that you don't have the capacity to speak, that you have to be silent. I think this is why there's so much power in free speech arguments, because people do have a sense. I know people in my own life who have a sense in their own day-to-day existence, despite the fact that they are not in politics in any professional capacity, that the things they have always believed have become verboten to say. They are sort of culturally dismissed. And so there can be a backlash effect in that, a feeling it often gets described as a feeling of losing power or losing hegemony.
When I was reading your book, though, another word was used in passing, disorientation. And I've been thinking a lot about that word, because the people I know who are of this political tendency, what I hear most often from them is a kind of disorientation, that the way all this change is experienced across a variety of domains, from how many immigrants there are, to what you can say about race, to gender fluidity, all the way up to things like inflation, and the Fed, and quantitative easing. There's just this constant sense of disorientation, which is also why I think the generation gap dimension is very important, because as you get older, and particularly if you're older without a lot of tethers into society, maybe you don't work anymore, you don't see the people you used to see, it just feels like things are changing very rapidly. And what often seems to me to unite the parties that respond to this tendency is a kind of promise that they will solve disorientation by making things the way they were. America, we're going to make America great again. We're going to have an economy built on manufacturing and coal. It has materialistic appeals at times, but also appeals around gender

and gender identity and race. But at its core is a kind of nostalgic promise that you won't have to feel like your own country has changed in a way that you don't recognize it and it doesn't recognize you. No, that's absolutely right. That's exactly what's going on. And in particular, a nostalgia for the past, because after all, we're talking about people's social identities. You can disagree about things like taxing and spending, but you can cut the pie in lots of different ways, and we can kind of agree to disagree. But when it comes to issues of what you can say, for example, what is socially acceptable in terms of race and ethnicity, or what's socially appropriate in terms of issues of gender or sexuality, then it's really getting at the heart of who you are, who you feel that your identity is, what you can be proud of, what your status is in that society, and what your moral values are. So a lot of these debates are bitter because it's really us them. Instead of being able to find a common ground for compromise,
as you can on economic issues, cultural issues are the ones which really get to the heart of who people see themselves as and how they see their community and how they see their country. And I think what's worth emphasizing here is it's not simply a psychological change, nor is it simply something which is changing in elites, like in Hollywood media or in journalism or in representation, but it's a real change in people's lives. It's a change that they realize is happening around them. They know that. They know that the clock really can't be turned back, and yet they hanker to at least respect that old forms of social status which they had when they grew up, and which is really part of their own lives. Give the example of Brexit. Brexit is a fascinating development. After all, Britain had been a member of the European Union for 40 years. It had been part and parcel. They were our closest trade partners in Britain. And yet, the way that it was sold in many ways during the referendum by those who were in favor, including Boris Johnson, was very much a return to Britain's greatness on the world stage. Boris Johnson didn't see Brexit as making Britain cut off. He saw it instead as a new way of reasserting, almost back to the days of the Second World War and Empire, where Britain was one of the major world players. One of the repeated statements was, the British economy is the fifth largest in the world. And much of the framing was about making Britain great again, just like the phrases there in American language for the Trump rhetoric as well. So people wanted to respect the old ways of doing things and to hanker after the things that they realized they actually were losing. It isn't just culture wars. It isn't just a cancel culture. It's a fundamental change in the nature of how society works and what the attitudes and what the values are. And these parties have come in and said, look, you need a voice. And we're going to speak for you. The establishment, the old parties, the mainstream, the Christian Democrats, the social Democrats, they don't care about you. But we do. And always, again, when Trump had his inaugural, you so remember that he depicted a place where the establishment was corrupt. The establishment was working for its own interests to get back into power and to pass things which they felt was appropriate. But at the same time, America was in crisis and the culture was in crisis. And he would defend the silent majority. He would defend the average American. He would stand there and be a strong leader, pushing back against all of these other forces and thereby restoring respect, if you like, for many of those who felt that they were no longer respected in American society and their views were no longer respected. They would just be on the pale. I want to try to untangle what you might think of as the materialist and the post-materialist

appeal of some of these politicians and parties. And this is a very live debate here. Now, you have a much broader set of global examples of knowledge, so you can tell me how well it tracks elsewhere. But there is, on the one hand, an argument. You'll hear this quite a bit, that what's really underestimated about the appeal of Donald Trump, maybe even around DeSantis or others like him, Brexiteers, Boris Johnson, is that they are jettisoning some of the really unpopular materialistic views of the conservative parties that they come to represent. In Donald Trump's case, promising not to cut Medicare and Social Security saying it was a lie, but saying that he would raise taxes on people like himself. You'll hear an argument that all those things that people experience as Trumpism are actually negatives. And why he is an effective politician is that he actually takes on more popular policy views, whether or not he follows through on them than people realize. But at the same time, there is a transgressive aesthetic that seems to reoccur among many of these politicians. You can see Ron DeSantis trying to ape it and learn it from Donald Trump, as many other Republicans
are. You can see it in Bolsonaro. You can see it in a different way in Boris Johnson. A lot of people who are involved in Brexite, you can see in a lot of media figures in these countries. Can you talk a bit about the role of the transgressive aesthetic and what role that plays in responding to this politics of cultural backlash?
So the transgressive ways of working is reflected in all sorts of aspects of populism. It's kind of part of its rhetoric and its appeal. People who can, leaders who can put their feet on the desk, who can swear in public, as we think about, for example, Duterte and the language which he would use in the Philippines, or who wish to challenge the power of the state and the establishment, those who have tried to really criticize, in particular, many public servants and civil servants in many cases, or who push back on experts. There was a famous phrase in Britain by Michael Gove once who said, experts who need experts. And the idea that we don't need these authorities, that these so-called authorities, whether they're in Covid or whether they're in other aspects of trying to run economic policy, don't really speak for the people. And if we can somehow tap into something which is just the ordinary people. And by the way, this is all quite coded, who is meant as the ordinary people, is often meant as the groups who are white and who are born in that country. And of course, the diversity is kind of overlooked. So some people are seen as effectively Swedish, or Italian, or British, but not others. But all of those groups, these leaders appeal to in fundamental ways. And as you say, what's happening in the competition is that you can think of this as left, right on the economy. And you can think of this as socially conservative and liberal on cultural issues. And what many populist leaders have done is they've gone towards the kind of left centre on the economy. And so they may be in favour, for example, as Boris Johnson was, of levelling up for the northern areas. Leveling up was the idea that we put more money into, say, Newcastle and Liverpool to try to make sure that the benefits of London were actually there in the north of England as well, where he where, of course, the Red War was where the Conservatives made gains. And you can see similar processes where other
parties, again, are in favour of welfare and in favour of strong education and strong healthcare. And that's particularly common, for example, the Sweden Democrats are along those lines. And the Norway Progress Party always favour a strong welfare state. But they also want

really to, again, go back in terms of socially conservative views on many of the other cultural issues which they feel they've been excluded from. I want to draw out the rationality of that view a little bit, because I think that there's a direct logic to it that is often missed. If you feel the culture has turned on you, if you feel that what is sayable and what is respectable is being enforced by institutions and experts who no longer care for you and what you think, then the need for politicians, for leaders who gleefully reject the gatekeeping capacity of those institutions and experts becomes very intense. I think this is something that is sometimes missed about some of these politicians that people don't like, in my view, generally, some of Trump's excesses, his cruelties, the way he acts. Some do, obviously, some find it very thrilling, but many don't. But even many who are comfortable with it appreciate that him and others like him don't seem cowed, because they're cowed, they feel cowed, and they feel some of their leaders have been cowed. People maybe agree with them, but won't really say it aloud. And then somebody comes out and says, Mexico isn't sending good people here and we shouldn't let them send
people here anymore and just build a wall and be done with it. It's like, yeah, that guy. And that there's something about in a lot of these different places, the aesthetic of transgressiveness being a kind of a reflection of a commitment or a reflection of an unwillingness to not be cowed when the main problem some of these people are voting or feeling is a feeling of being cowed. There's like a more direct relationship there that makes transgressiveness a more essential part of the cocktail than I think people who believe maybe these parties could reemerge as economically liberal, socially conservative, but nevertheless, genteel are missing.
Yes, that's absolutely right. And it's essentially being part of the out group, the group of kids at school who are always excluded and picked upon and bullied and all that sort of thing. And if you have a strong leader who says, I'm for you, I'm defending this tribal identity, I'm defending the traditional values that you believe I respect your values, I stand for you and I speak for you. Then of course that leads a direct appeal and think about some of the symbolism. For example, Victor Orban, when he speaks, he's used language which is really frowned upon in the European Union. He says, for example, that Hungary does not want to
be a mixed race country, which is really controversial in Europe. He's demonized immigrants, he's used
anti-Semitic language and restricted the rights of the LGBTQ community. He criticizes the EU very openly as well. And so in all of those ways is transgressive. And people are out groups, the groups of kids at school who were never part of the fashionable clique, they feel okay, maybe the traditional establishment don't like me, maybe traditional parties don't speak to me, maybe the middle classes who've taken over politics and the media and college education in particular and the changes which that's produced, maybe other people can speak for me instead. And that's very much part of their appeal, I think. Now transgressive leaders often tend not simply to transgress in terms of their personal style or their language, but then to start to also, once they get it elected and into office, they start to transgress in terms of democratic norms. So they'll push back on some of the niceties and they rather overlook them, for example, making patronage appointments to the courts or friends or partisans who they support, or basically breaking the law. There have been so many corruption scandals among some of these

parties, some of which have brought down the leader and some of which we've seen a revival after that. If we think about some of the cases there, many court cases for some of the leaders which have been a fundamental problem. Or we can think of other ways in which these parties have pushed back on freedom of the press and also increasingly tolerance of violence. Now, are all the parties accepting these pushing backs on democratic liberal values? No, they're not. Some of them have actually moderated their views, partly to get into coalition. And that's an important difference, I think, between majoritarian systems like the United States and the United Kingdom and coalition governments, which are much more common in Europe with proportional representation. So in a winner-take-all, if you're going to be transgressive in your leadership style, then it's often the case that presidents will try to also go for executive grandisement, pushing back on liberal democracies and liberal norms, basically. In coalition governments, what we often find is that where populist parties get into power, they often tend to moderate their language and they moderate their policies. And they also don't push back so much on liberal democracy because that's how they can actually get a coalition together with some of their centre of right parties. And then they make some gains on certain issues like immigration issues and immigration policies and restrictions. So there are differences there, but transgression is a common aspect of populism, a very common aspect indeed, even on things like accents and language.

These values changes, as you described, have been happening for many decades, and you can see the kinds of politicians you describe also arising over these decades. In America, I think the classic forerunner to Donald Trump, as an example, is Pat Buchanan. But in your data and telling, something happens around 2010 that is like a step change in the success of this populist authoritarian tendency. Tell me why you locate that in 2010 and then what you think the cause of it is. So as you say, these are long-standing parties. There were parties in the 1950s left over from the Second World War, which were neo-Nazis, often banned as hate groups or made illegal, for example, in Germany.

There were parties in the 1970s. The Front National, or the National Rallyers, it's now called with Marine Le Pen, is actually celebrating its 50th anniversary. And you can see similar patterns like the British National Party in the 1970s. But they were always marginalised. They were always below thresholds to actually achieve seats. They may give 4% of the vote, 5%, but it wasn't sufficient in order to have any sort of numbers, still less to have any sort of power in a coalition, still less to be the largest party in government. So what changed, I think, was a number of precipitating developments and also some of the dissatisfaction, which is a long-term trend. So there's been a period of de-alignment in party politics, in many post-industrial societies, and that can be dated again from the 60s and 70s, when what happened was that the mainstream parties in the centre-right and the centre-left, so the Christian Democrats, the Conservatives, the Liberals, Social Democrats, Socialists and so on, they gradually lost support. They were at their height in the 1950s. They went down from the 1960s, progressively the 70s, progressively the 80s, and party systems fragmented. The old lollities were lost. For example, union workers would normally always support Socialist parties and Communist parties in Europe, whereas the petit bourgeoisie and the middle classes, by and large, particularly in the private sector,

support the Conservative parties. But those class identities weakened in Europe, and the basis, the kind of foundations of party politics, became much looser. People were more willing to move around in different elections or to vote for one thing for a local election, something else for a national election and so on. So this provided opportunities for smaller parties, and it provided it both on the progressive side, like the Greens, who suddenly started to move up, as well as the support for the radical right or populist parties. And it takes time. All of these are processes where once you get a few members of parliament, you get a bit more of a platform, you get more credibility. People don't want to waste their vote. They need to have some sense of what the party stands for. And if it's always just the major parties standing for campaigning, they have very little idea, and particularly if they're demonised as being very extreme and outside the pale, people are not going to vote for populists. But gradually what's happened is that the populists themselves have become much more savvy at presenting a more moderate image on many issues. For example, many of the European populist party most recently, after Brexit, have stopped saying and stopped being explicitly anti-European Union. They said that that policy really wasn't the one that was giving them support, and it was simply alienating them from the other mainstream parties as well and from many voters. So by making their more extreme elements, the real hate groups and the groups who are really using extremism in politics, by excluding those, and by appealing primarily on immigration, that was a rising issue in Europe, particularly, remember the European immigration crisis when Angela Merkel opened the door in about 2015. That led to a surge of migrants, along with the war in Syria, the war in Afghanistan, and economic deprivation and economic migrants from Africa. So the economic recession of 2008, the eurozone crisis, which followed with very deep consequences for Mediterranean Europe, and then the rise of migrants, which is continuing, although that has gone down as an issue in Europe,
all of those created very favorable circumstances. And again, all of these changes are gradual processes. You get, for example, 10% of members of parliament, suddenly you might have a coalition partner, suddenly you're much more visible, you also get access to public funds. And so for the next election, you're likely to be in a much larger position, much more effective position, in order to get elected in that. And so we can see those developments. For example, Georgia Maloney, Italy's first female prime minister, leader of the brothers of Italy, she just got 26% of the vote, a quarter. Her party had roots in fascism, but she abandoned that, and she sought to tone down the extremism and really be pro-European Union, even pro-NATO for Ukraine, but still anti-migrant and anti-immigrant. And she's basically now leading the coalition with Berlusconi and with Matteo Salvani for the Lega party. So the party became more respectable, the extremist image was less evident, and over a series of elections, basically populist parties have gained in Italy. You can see the same in France, if you look at Marine Le Pen, and in the last presidential election, of course, Emmanuel Macron won, but Marine Le Pen came second with 41% of the vote in the second round presidential election, up from 34% in 2017. And you can see a steady rise in a series of presidential elections, as well as elections to the European Parliament. So gradually, the party itself became more moderate, Marine Le Pen became
more effective as a campaigner, she abandoned her father's extremism, and with rising de-alignment for the major parties, and with rising disaffection with the major institutions, she has a basis of

support. And you can see similar patterns in Belgium, as well as in many parts of Central Eastern Europe, law and justice, for example, in Poland, in Turkey, with Erdogan, in Hungary, of course, with Fidets, achieving a substantial majority of the votes and two-thirds majority in Parliament. In all these cases, it's a gradual rise of minor parties, and they become part of the government. And then, of course, the other parties also are in decline. The center has been losing ground, and it will not hold. One thing that you distinguish in the book is between supply side explanations in politics and demand side. And so there's the supply side, which you've been explaining here, that the party somewhat changed, they trimmed their sales, they entered into new coalitions. But there's also the demand side, which you emphasize, which is, I think, often overlooked in politics. What do people actually want, and why do they want it? What kind of politician will they respond to if that politician or party arises? And you argue that in this period, we've been seeing profound demographic and cultural tipping points that are changing the appeal of these politicians precisely because they are changing the desperation of voters for politicians like these. These politicians, in a way, are the response to a market or even small democratic demand. Tell me a bit about your thinking on tipping points.
So as you say, you have just like any economic market, the demand side of the public and the electorate, the supply side, which is how the parties respond, including the major parties, in terms of issues, do they take them on board or do they exclude them? And then you also have the regulations, you have the rules of the game. And that really is important for how successful some parties are versus others. So the idea of a tipping point is that if you've got a group, and again, it can be on the environmental group as much as the radical right group, and there are only a small proportion of the electorate, then in any majoritarian system, there's very little reason to necessarily cater to those because you already have loyalists as your base, and you have an established coalition amongst the groups who are going to support you, and therefore, you can appeal to those. But if there's a tipping point, and that particular tipping point angers and alienates the group that was the former majority, so that they become much
more aware that the values and attitudes and identities they hold are no longer necessarily in alignment with how the culture is moving, then the politics of resentment comes forward.
And that's exactly where the populace can tap into this. So obviously much of the MAGA movement in America is premised on the idea of the demographic replacement. And this is that the urban areas are expanding, rural areas are contracting. The white population is dramatically declining, particularly in places like California, as we see the rise in the number of Hispanics, and also African Americans and black voters. And so we can see substantial social changes in class, in rural, urban, in race and ethnicity, in religion. And all of these are real changes in society. They're nothing that's being made up. And as a result, those groups who feel that their their identity is based on those assumptions feel that they're losing out.
Let me pick up on something you mentioned there, because when I look at the time frame we're talking about this post 2010 period, the thing that immediately comes to mind for me is the iPhone, the rise of social media, increased competitiveness in the broader media. And I think this is important because there is the question of the ways the culture and society are changing.
But none of us have access to the entire society or culture. And most people aren't sitting around reading polls about other people's opinions about cultural issues. So there's this question of how

do you end up feeling like what leads somebody in a rural area of Wisconsin to feel like everything is different now? And it seems to me in a lot of places all around the world at the same time, you have this rise in algorithmic media, in highly engagement oriented media that is constantly confronting people with usually stories charged around identity, in many cases at least, that really give I think often an outsized view of how quickly society is changing. But nevertheless, are a very, very big part of a very rapid set of changing views, a sense of what you can and can't say because people are now yelling at you in the comments section of your own Facebook post. Something I felt was a little bit under theorized in the book is this dimension of the changes in media 2010 is right around then with the rise of smartphones is a signal event. And in my experience of it, it's a signal event that tends to lead to people being confronted a lot more with whatever they fear most about the country they live in. And so the fact that that would lead to a rise in these populist authoritarian figures seems pretty logical to me.
Yes, the book does not focus that much on political communication. But part of that is because I wrote an earlier book called Digital Divide, which really said that the internet, which was taking off at the time started, of course, in around 1995 in terms of the visual browser. The internet is a tool, and it can be used both positively and negatively for democratic engagement, for political communications and for a variety of other things. So on the one hand, clearly, it allows anybody to break outside of their bubble. If they were focused in the past on their local newspaper or local television, they can now see the events going on. For example, they can watch live the Brazilian election on Sunday, or they could have watched, for example, Rishi Sunak when he was in parliament the other day as the first prime minister and his first outing. So it gives us a broader sense of information if you want that information, and if you have the skills and the cognitive ability and the education and the information to make sense of it. On the other hand, if you simply want to listen to your own tribe, and you want to simply be in a media bubble and just have repetition of exactly the same messages and the rise of misinformation and disinformation, then of course you can do that as well.
So it's a double-edged sword, the role of social media in all of these processes.
Does it reinforce conspiratorial theories in the United States, but also in Europe as well?
Absolutely. Does it reinforce misinformation and the pace and spread of misinformation both across borders and within countries? Absolutely. But is it primarily a driver of the support for authoritarian populace? And there I am, somewhat more skeptical. In some ways it seems like it's too obvious a candidate to be blamed. And it's so many other more socially profound shifts in society, which I think have caused these developments, where the media, including legacy media as well as social media, are more of a reflection of what's going on than a primary driver of what's going on. Well, let me try to take the other side of this argument for a minute, because I think I'm more convinced in the other direction. So part of it is the way that these changes in media also change the reality of political systems. I am skeptical. Barack Obama becomes a Democratic nominee and thus the president of the United States in 2008 and 2009 without
social media. His campaign is the first to really use social media very, very well. And of course, the amount of money they're able to raise online is tremendous. He has to do something very hard in beating Hillary Clinton that year. Take out social media. I'm not sure he does it. And if he doesn't do it, that also changes the way people sense society changing. Barack Obama is, as you

put it in the book, a shock to the American political system. And so for a lot of people, the first black president is a really transformational event that arouses a lot of, let's call it, cultural anxiety. But Donald Trump, similarly, I don't think Donald Trump becomes a Republican nominee without Twitter. And Twitter is sort of tremendous capacity to influence traditional media coverage. So that's one level of it. That what is happening as candidates who are intensely supported by portions of the population can get around some of the traditional ways you needed to go through gatekeepers to get coverage that changes who can win and what kinds of things
can be won. Then another level, you mentioned here about your book, The Digital Divide. And I think you put that a little bit on education. If you're thoughtful and out there looking to use the internet to your own benefit and become a more informed person and get more perspectives, or you can use it a little bit thoughtlessly and get surrounded in an echo chamber.
I think that's true, obviously. But I think we have a lot of evidence at this point that education and intention may not be as relevant here as we wish they were. That particularly because of algorithmic media, where it's not really just what you are choosing, but what the computer or the algorithm, I should say, is deciding you like, you start getting served up, certain kinds of stories, certain kinds of voices. So I do think there's something too about the ways in which people who are very into politics now have this way of getting served up things that they're more and more into, which in turn creates all these dynamics that I think push people towards the edges and create a counter reaction among their opposition on the other side.
So I guess I'd put that as a provocation here. Isn't it at least plausible that one of the shocks to the system is that all of a sudden these kinds of figures and ideas and news stories and local news stories that once might have been somewhat marginalized now have this capacity to go viral and to create the political context we're all living in. I always think of Bolsonaro's supporters chanting Facebook at his victory speech. I mean, I think they were right about that.
So clearly social media has changed the nature of campaigning, in many ways returning back to its roots of one-to-one communication and one-to-a-few in group contexts, etc. And it's changed the nature of politics and it's changed the speed and the distance. Those two things have both shrunk on any particular political event. So immediately you can know if something's happened and you can follow it along if you're interested in that. Has it however changed attitudes, values, norms and political orientations? And it's there which I just pushed back because on the one hand it seems too easy to blame social media and the rise of the internet on some of these phenomena, which in my view based on deep roots in society rather than in just our processes of communication. And of course journalists love to point to Twitter as the way that we all find out about information. But of course if you actually look, we've included a whole bunch of new questions about social media use in the World Value Survey in the last wave. And when you ask people in most countries, including in Russia but also in India and also in many Western European countries, where do you get your most common source of information? They all say television. That's still the source. Now are they watching television through their iPhones perhaps, but they're still watching the BBC or ITV or CNN or NBC, etc. etc. Are they reading newspapers? Probably not. But are they reading an article from the New York Times or the Washington Post or any of our legacy media? Absolutely. Are they also going towards the fringe of politics and reading other things from QAnon, which might not have been available in the past? Yes. But of

course
again we've always had for a long, long period the rise of the far right through radio. So again it's an amplification and it's an expansion. But talk radio, which was there for a decade at least before the internet, also carried much the same messages, also reached a large audience and also created those sorts of senses of tribal communities as you can tune into one or tune into another depending on your political prize. So the internet reinforces, accelerates, doesn't necessarily I think change the bones of politics, doesn't change the ways in which we engage or how we get involved. And speed in itself, which is vital to journalism, is not necessarily how most people are simply responding to politics. As you know, most people aren't watching the politics on Twitter, they're watching Adele and things like that, which are also on Twitter. So sometimes we exaggerate how much attention, because we're paying attention to these things, we exaggerate how much everybody
else is as well. Oh, I never think, I should say this very, very openly, I never think the power of Twitter or even a lot of other social media is its direct role as a venue of political information. It's that the people who are providing political information and making political decisions in all the other venues, the elites of the media, of politics, of technology, they're all jacked into Twitter all the time. The influence of Twitter is that all the editors and producers on the cable news networks and staffers for all the politicians and Donald Trump himself and Elon Musk and that they are disproportionately getting it and then using their sort of other influence channels to increase the salience of the debates that are dominant there. But I think something you brought up brings another very interesting counterargument to the fore, which is who's to say we're in any kind of unusual period of cultural backlash at all. I mean, you go back into the 20th century, you have Mussolini, you have Hitler, you have Father Coughlin, you have all kinds of populist authoritarian figures who wield much more influence than these figures wield today.
Maybe what happened here is simply that it has been far enough since fascism and other kinds of populist authoritarian movements were discredited, such that some movements that have more of this
aesthetic can begin to reemerge in much the same way, although obviously I have a slightly different view on it, that the fading of the Soviet Union has reinvigorated socialist politics in America, both as a substantive direction and as a label, because socialism isn't quite the slur it once was. Maybe the only thing aberrational here is this couple decade period when these other tendencies were sufficiently discredited that politicians couldn't rise through them, and we're just in a reversion to the historical mean.
Yes. I mean, the starting point for any trend is absolutely critical for its interpretation, depending on whether you think inflation or unemployment has got better or worse, depends on what date you're picking and so on. So we certainly can look at the classic era of fascism and what we used to term totalitarian governments of that particular era, and the post-war era was certainly one which looked at that extensively. But also, I think there is something new. If we look around the world, which we haven't really mentioned, is all the number of leaders in executive office who really have this broad orientation. We've focused a lot on Europe, to some extent, on the United States. But let's think, for example, India, the most populous democracy, which is backsliding, and Narendra Modi emphasizing, in that case, Hindu nationalism against Muslims, the Philippines, until recently, Rodrigo de Terte, Turkey,

Reykjav Erdovan, who started off fairly democratic but who's moved his country increasingly after an attempt to coup in an authoritarian direction and against the European Union, Venezuela, Nicolas Maduro, taking over from Hugo Chavez with a left-wing form of populism, Argentina, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, Peronists, and a long tradition, of course, in Latin America, AMLO in Mexico is another example there, as is Daniel Ortega, in terms of Nicaragua. Huguain was seen as fairly democratic when he first came in, increasingly authoritarian, over successive elections. Evo Morales can be seen as a populist in Slovakia and in Belarus, as well as Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic. And there's even arguments which is expanding the notion, but maybe even Vladimir Putin is populist in certain ways. He wants to, he's clearly authoritarian, he has tremendous coercive powers and financial powers, but he also wants to remain popular amongst the Russian public. So this idea of populism, depending on whether you have a narrow or a broad notion, if you look around the world, it's much, much broader than it was simply in the era of Mussolini and the era of Franco and the era of Hitler. It really has gone viral in many places, in many developing societies. Sometimes it's stable, sometimes it's not, sometimes we see presidents moving up and down in popularity or in and out of office, but it certainly seems to be a development which is increasing in power and rising as a threat to liberal democracy. And of course it goes hand in hand with democratic backsliding, the other major phenomena also of the period from 2010 to 2022.

One other explanation you'll hear, particularly in this period, which, you know, 2010 is following the financial crisis, which was a global crisis, is that this isn't about race, it isn't about cultural anxiety, it's about economics. The left of center or even traditional right of center parties stopped delivering economically, they had stopped for some time, you had stagnating wages say in America, and then you had a big economic shock, which fundamentally discredited them. And what is being drafted on here is frustration. And that would also then imply a straightforward answer. If other parties can deliver economically, that will drain the potency of these populist parties. How do you think about that both as a causal explanation for the post-2010 rise of the populist authoritarian right? And how do you think about it as a solution?

In 2015, when Trump first started to descend the Golden Staircase, this was a popular explanation. And political economists certainly looked at areas of the country in Europe and in the United States where manufacturing industry had declined primarily as a result of Chinese imports, and certain areas such as textiles, such as computers and so on, footwear. And there was a correlation between the areas which Trump did well at, and those areas of loss of manufacturing. And similarly in Europe, it was the areas which had lost the mining industries and extractive industries and so on. The problem is that this economic explanation, which appeared fairly plausible and is still advocated by some, doesn't appear so plausible when we look at it across countries. Some of the most affluent countries in the world, with very solid welfare states, including Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, one of the most affluent countries again in Europe, the Netherlands. These have all got very strong authoritarian populist parties, Swiss People's Party, Progress Parties, Freedom Party, Austria, etc. So it's not simply the poorer areas of Europe or the poorer countries of Europe, like Bulgaria or Romania, which have seen the rise of populism. And also, as soon as you go to the survey data and you look at the individual level

data, we can ask people about their economic circumstances. We can monitor their class. We can look at their income and their savings and how secure they feel. And when you do that, what you find, whether you're looking at support for Trump in 2016 and 2020, or support for many of these parties in Europe through the European Social Survey, is that the individual level economic indicators, by and large, don't predict whether somebody voted for these parties. Basically, class has been kind of flat. Other factors, age and other factors like ethnicity, really trumped this strength and significance of class. Similarly, in terms of whether you have personal savings, there's also relative deprivation, whether you feel you're better off than your parents. So economics, the jury is still a bit out, I think, but most of the evidence seems to say it's cultural issues, not economic issues, which really are the cutting edge for why voters swung towards these parties. So then, if simply delivering economically doesn't work, what does, what does a post-material left do? This is the challenge. On economics, clearly, the natural solution, whether it was for Biden or whether it's for Keir Starmer in the Labour Party in Britain, or for many other leaders of social democratic parties, is to say, well, we'll just go back and we'll improve the areas where we lost some votes. And that means things like jobs programs. It means training. It means expanding college access. It means improving work opportunities, housing, roads, you know, all of those things which are very familiar. The assumption is that we can follow social democratic policies, expand all of these services, improve rail transport, for example, have levelling up improved educational opportunities, particularly apprenticeship programs, for example, for the less skilled, so they don't necessarily need to go to a university, but they can get practical skills as plumbers, electricians, and so on. And in the new green industries, all of that is a set of assumptions that social democratic parties on the left are very comfortable with. The problem is that it's not clear that this is the driver of the support if it's the cultural issues. And the problem about the cultural issues is that the parties on the left are totally divided internally on issues like reproductive rights, on issues like diversity and immigration, on issues like changing immigration policies, or backtracking, for example, on LGBTQ rights. It's impossible for many of these parties to consider diluting or reversing some of those liberal gains. And they can't also thereby appeal to the classic working class base, which is very much more traditional and more conservative on those sorts of issues. So they're stuck within a rock and a hard place. And I think this is their fundamental dilemma. It's far easier for the parties on the centre-right to adapt. They can basically go into bed with the populist parties, and they can change the immigration policies, which they have. That's the big area where populist parties have made a big success in Western Europe. And they can also continue with their economic policies, which are fairly libertarian, tax cuts and things like that. And, you know, you can have a coalition which is kind of accommodated.

But left parties have to go into bed with greens. They can't basically have any sort of compromise with the authoritarian populist parties. It's just impossible in their makeup. But particularly if you understand a lot of what's happening here as a set of anxieties, not just a set of policies, that would at least seem to me to open up strategies that are a little bit different. So I always think of Obama as having been fairly masterful as a politician at this. I think now there's a tendency to look back at him and read him a little bit overly literally that, you know, he didn't support gay marriage or, you know, had this or that position

on immigration. But he really always paired in a very, very explicit way this excitement about change, right? Hope and change, change we can believe in, with a constant effort to answer and reassure cultural anxiety. And it often seems to me that one or the other gets chosen. You either see politicians who are good at emphasizing how much change they are going to bring, or even
if they're not good at it, that's what they are doing. So you might think of an Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who I think is very good at representing change, or a Hillary Clinton who is very, who talked very intensely about how much change she would bring and what it would mean for
her to be elected. But don't do very much to try to reassure people who are nervous about the way the world is changing. Or you can look at somebody, I think, like Joe Biden, and there are other figures like him, who are oriented at trying not to arouse too much anxiety around change, right? They want to try to keep their coalition together, but they are there to be acceptable in a way to voters who are outside the coalition. It's very well established, I think at this point, that the Joe Biden and 2020 primary campaign wins on this theory of electability, wins on a theory that he'll be acceptable to other people. And that theory actually turns out to be true, but that there is some kind of synthesis here for talented politicians, where they are simultaneously either themselves representing or able to tell a story of change, while quite explicitly trying to tell a story of why that does not have to leave people out. But I do think there, look, I don't win elections, I've not done it, but I observe and report on politicians. And I have just noticed a kind of literalism creeping into it, as if the only variables on the board are what literal positions you take on policies. And I'm a policy guy, and I track policy positions, and I track policies. But Joe Biden has a lot of very popular policies. They're much more popular than the policies Donald Trump pushed, and they have functionally the same approval rating right now, as the other one did at a similar point. And there's other confounding factors here. I don't think it is so as impossible as people have begun to make it sound, to be optimistic about the future, and conscious of the fact that many people are fearful about the future. Now, you have to be a very talented politician to do that. But, you know, you can always have to be a talented politician to change politics. But it does depend on the issue dimension. So if we're talking about economics, of course, they're promising a better life and prosperity and affluence and minimal pain that will go along with that. Although, of course, under periods of inflation, people do realize that there has to be pain as well. On foreign policy, dramatic changes which they can implement in terms of internationalism versus nationalism in terms of engagement in Ukraine versus isolationism and so on. So those are things which you can see how politicians can promise certain deliverables and try to achieve those and people can be confirmed. But when it comes to culture, I just think it's far more difficult. When it comes to immigration, it's far more difficult to promise that on the one hand, you're going to make America great again, you're going to make Sweden Swedish, as people said in the Democratic Party there, or that you're going to reverse some of the things which allowed these populist parties to come to office. I've been obsessed in the last couple of weeks, of course, with the leadership contest in the Conservative Party, as you might be able to tell in the UK. Yes. And I think about how the leadership has changed, right? So on the one hand, Corbyn suggested radical economic change, so radical that nobody would vote for him because he really was pretty far left and he was kind of insular in

how he saw that. And Boris Johnson said, get Brexit done. So he promised to follow through on the referendum, which was popular at the time, or at least enough popularity. After Johnson, of course, we had the six-week experience of Liz Truss, who promised radical change and everybody, everything went nuts. And it was basically a government of chaos and inflation soared and the pound dropped and bond markets went mad and so on. And now, of course, what we have, essentially if you saw this last Prime Minister's Question Time, was two politicians, both of whom are very kind of sensible, middle of the road, somewhat boring. They do not want to promise much change. They want to promise continuity, restoration, but Rishi Sunak wants to say things are going to be stable and we're not going to have the chaos of either trust or the drama and scandals of the Johnson administration. At the same time, whilst he's putting forward a number of different financial options to try and increase economic stability and reduce economic instability, he's not changing on immigration policy. That's a legacy of the previous administration with some fairly extreme measures. And the simple reason why he can't change on that is he feels, if he does, that the populist party will rush in and Nigel Farage will come back to life and the Conservatives will really be going into an election facing a moderately sensible and solid Labour party on the one side, very popular, 30 points ahead in the polls in the recent period, and then also being eaten on the far right by the anti-immigrant policies of Nigel Farage or any sort of far right party at that side as well. So some changes reassuring, but where populists say let's go backwards, let's reassure by not having too much change, then it's very difficult to face both forwards and backwards on some of these classic issues.

Let me ask about another cut there, this cut between the cultural issues and the economic issues. This is something that has been on my mind a lot reading your work and just thinking about the conversations I have with people about inflation. I was talking earlier about disorientation as a politically salient emotion, a sense that things are changing, they're not right, this isn't the country you knew. And a lot of what I hear in inflation discourse sounds much more like what I hear in what gets called cultural discourse than what I would understand as normal economic discussion. Something's going wrong, we're losing the country and the economy we once had. And it's made me think a bit about the ways you can have materialistic and post-materialistic responses to economic issues. So you might think of this as like the Paul Ryan, Ron Paul, or Mitt Romney, Ron Paul divide. The economy wasn't great around 2012, it was coming back, but it wasn't great. And some people responded to that in the Republican Party by saying, we need Mitt Romney, a sober, private equity guy, knows how to lead things, knows how to run a corporate office, knows how to manage. And others said, we need Ron Paul, we need to go back to gold. And I think both of these tendencies live in the appeals of Donald Trump. But it makes me wonder a bit whether or not we overly code economics as materialistic. Because oftentimes, a lot of the debates about economics end up having this implicit question about whether or not what you're looking for here is like what you might call technocratic management of the economy. Or what you're looking for is a sense, what you're feeling, experiencing is a sense that too much here has changed. We used to know what we're doing, and now we've gotten away from the wisdom of our

forefathers. And we need gold, we need to bind the Federal Reserve, we need not so much debt, whatever it might be, that there's a tendency to experience those through the same lens of disorientation, the same lens of too much has changed, and it has robbed us of what makes us

great. And that sometimes the effort politically to try to answer economic fears as simply economic, as opposed to as part of this larger miasma of anxiety and particularly generational anxiety is actually quite misguided. No, I think that is right. And that when we see prices rising so sharply in groceries and people's lifestyles, when we see the mortgage rate rising so that people are no longer able to renew their mortgages and may have to lose their homes, and we see other sorts of economic crisis, then that is going to create tremendous anxiety, which is both cultural, as well as purely materialistic. And if you go back to Ron's early work, he would say that when you get an economic crisis, of course, those rising importance. And if you perceive it as an economic crisis, whether it is or is not, for example, in your family or in your community, then it's genuine. And then those material concerns come back and you want basically competence in your government, you want a government of technocrats or at least the government that can deliver basic economic security. Once that's secured, and you're into a period of growth and prosperity, or at least steady growth, then that's the time in which these other concerns rise to the surface. And you can start to be concerned about the quality of life and personal relationships and a wide variety of other aspects which are affecting society, like social cohesion or social order. So the two things aren't isolated by any means, they interact. One implication of framing much of this or understanding much of this as a generational conflict. Is it generations age out of the electorate? And that's something you say in the book that we might be in this lag on the one hand is more cultural backlash because the younger generations have gotten older, they've gotten bigger. And as such, what used to be the counterculture has become the culture. And that's made what used to be the culture feel resentful, feel silenced, and created a yearning for these transgressive, strongman politicians who can put things back the way they were, re-empower you, make you feel safe in your own country again. But year by year, the size of the millennials and then the Gen Z years is getting bigger. And it sort of seems to me that you see what we're in as a kind of lag period between when the younger generations are big enough for their politics to really dominate and the older generations
are small enough for their politics to be a more obviously minoritarian tendency. On the other hand, ideas of demographic determinism have become quite unsafe in politics recently, particularly given how wrong Democrats were about what the browning of America would look like for them. So how do
you see this? Are we in a lag? Should we expect this to just be a kind of period of turbulence? And then in 15 years we'll have resettled into a new normal. What's your projection in the slightly longer frame? So secular changes, long-term changes by generation are pretty evident. You can see these patterns across many different societies, across many different surveys, and across many different time periods where we have panel surveys and so on. And there are things like greater secularization and there's a kind of religiosity which has been evident. Problem is that generational changes take a long time to have any sort of effect. And so when you're changing, as we say, with this tipping point, where the majority population that once took for granted certain values sees that they've become a large but still minority within their own societies, when you've become from 60 percent down to 50 percent down to 40 percent, and coincidentally, by the way, most of the indicators throughout Trump's period in office showed that about 40 percent of the population consistently in America supported him, approved of him, voted for him,

and so on. When you become 40 percent but you still outvote and you're still energized, then you're both angry and energized to be active and you're still having some clout largely because the younger generation are not so active in conventional politics. As you become the 30 percent and the 20 percent, you're much more likely to get a process in which you feel you can no longer speak up because of social pressures. Here you come across what Elizabeth Noel Newman used to talk about self-censorship. And so, for example, racist attitudes that could be expressed say, decades ago in the 50s are no longer acceptable in society. And then you yourself no longer feel that you can say things once you become a small minority. But of course, again, that takes a long time. And the real question for me is this, can we actually get to that demographic change? Or by the time, in particular, the United States get to that, is the political system and democracy, as we know it, going to be so changed by those who have politicized the refusal to accept the decline that we can no longer have effective political representation? And there are so many indicators of that, which everybody is aware of, where candidates increasingly no longer say that they will accept the results if they lose, where we see changes to laws which are going to minimize some of the demographic changes or attempt to minimize them, for example, for minority communities,
when we see many other changes to the electoral system or to the political system.
It's not clear to me that the long-term generational rise of liberal values,
which I do think is happening and which there's solid evidence in the polls, is necessarily going to trump all these other aspects which are changing the political institutions in America and really are weakening democracy and the public's faith in the norms of democracy in America. And I think we can see these changes also in, again, some other countries, Hungary being a case which clearly comes to mind, but many other also countries where increasing social intolerance as these changes occur, lack of social trust, lack of trust in institutions, lack of the glue that holds communities together and holds countries together is increasingly becoming evident as these minority parties and candidates and presidents come to power. So it's really a question of long-term change, yes, but politics gets in the way and other things may not hold in order to allow that representational change to actually occur. That, again, the jury is still out. I think that's a good place to end it. So always our final question. What are three books that you'd recommend to the audience? So where does all of this lead us? I think one of the big questions which I'm really fascinated about and which I've been working on in recent months is to think about the basis of popular support for authoritarian leaders, the basis of support for attitudes towards democracy and democratic norms. And I think we're getting some new literature which really starts to look at that and I'd like to recommend three. Firstly, when we think about dictatorships, like, for example, Putin in Russia or many other cases, Lukashenko in Belarus, President Xi in China, we assume that they're in power because they exert coercive power, they have control of the military, the police, the security forces, they can throw their opponents into jail, or they have power which arises from patronage, state ownership, licenses, oligarchs, they can distribute largesse and corruption. But the new literature really says maybe there's genuine support for authoritarian strongman leaders who promise security and order and that many people may feel that that's a priority, not freedom and not the chaos that can be attributed to democracy. So the first book, Alexander Matovsky, Popular Dictatorships, he has used some really interesting new data, particularly from Russia and from Central and Eastern Europe, to say that maybe

leaders have actually really risen partly because of deep political and economic insecurity crisis by promising efficient, strong armed rule, tempered by some form of elections, some form of popular debate, maybe leaders like Putin have actually got public support behind them. Now, we don't know for sure, it may be that the opinion polls aren't reliable, that's entirely possible, but I think that's a really interesting new take on how we explain the rise of authoritarianism
and the backsliding of democracy in many countries around the world. Second book which builds on that
is another good book by Sergei Guryov and Daniel Trisman and the book is called Spin Dictators and it's about the changing face of tyranny in the 21st century. And again, it's going back to many of the dictators and authoritarian regimes and saying, what's the basis of their support? Well, again, in the past, it would be that there'd be a military coup d'état as in Myanmar and the generals would basically come into power, the same as true in Egypt. But increasingly, what you find today is the use of propaganda in a way that hasn't been used in the past. Propaganda's always been there. It was there, for example, with Goebbels in Germany. It's been there with Mussolini in use of radio and so on, but nowadays what we have is electoral authoritarian regimes and they've learned
that if they manipulate and fake democracy and they manipulate the information which is available through censorship, a traditional technique, but also through very effective control, again, this can be how they can maintain popular support. And the last book is a classic, it's not a modern study, but I think we now need to go back to read Haren Anna Arendt and we need to read the origins
of totalitarianism and reflect on the developments of the 20s and the 30s and reflect on the nature of, again, how these regimes came to power. A classic book written in the aftermath of the Second World War, but so many of the things which she was writing about, the birth of anti-Semitism,
for example, the Dreyfus Affair, the role of race, of how we can think about the Petit Bozhazi who was supporting strongman rulers and how we can think about class and totalitarian movements. All of those, I think, are really giving us important insights into our contemporary regime. And we're very familiar with democratic backsliding, everybody is talking about that. We have a lot of description about how it occurs and studies about, for example, how democracies die or how democracies are backsliding. But our theories, I think, have to think anew
and have to think that new authoritarian regimes are different to old authoritarian regimes. And we need to get to grips and discard some of our liberal assumptions
and get some new evidence and new data to basically say, is there genuine popular appeals of authoritarianism? We've measured support for democracy around the world in many, many surveys throughout the Third Wave era, that's to say, from the early mid-70s onwards. But what's the popular support? Not for democracy with a big D, but for an erosion of democratic norms and practices, and then real support for the values which authoritarian strongman leaders promise. Do Americans want stability? Do they want security? Do they want a restoration of the America of the
past and a sense of order versus crime and a sense that America can be, quote, great again? If they do, is that also the secret to the support of many other strongman leaders around the world?

And maybe we can look comparatively and we can really try to get to grips with why backsliding is occurring and whether this is the heart of the challenges facing liberal democracy.
Pippa Norris, thank you very much. Thank you, Ezra. A pleasure to be with you.
The Ezra Clan shows produced by Amapha Agawu, Annie Galvin, Jeff Geld and Roshy Karma.
Fact-checking by Michelle Harris, Mary March Locker and Kate Sinclair.
Original music by Isaac Jones, mixing by Jeff Geld, audience strategy by Shannon Busta.
Special thanks to Kristen Lin and Christina Semilewski.