

[Transcript] The Realignment / Introducing The Realignment Part II - The Lead Up to 2024 and Beyond

Marshall here. Welcome back to The Realignment.

Hey, everyone. Welcome back to the show. Today's episode is a slightly modified version of the substack I sent out yesterday. I wanted to take the chance to review both where the show is, where it's been, where it's going, especially given the fact that we are a little more than a year out from the 2024 election. So, at a broad level, I've really found myself increasingly saying, okay, we get it when listening to myself or another guest or host statesome 2018 vintage wisdom when it comes to populism's effect on American politics. You know, back before I started the show of Sagar back in 2019, we were really looking for an outlet to express a lot of these realignment-centric ideas because it didn't feel as if a lot of the changes we were just noticing as young guys out in DC were being actually recognized in the broader media space. So, now that I've had the chance to do 350 plus episodes, I thought this would be a great chance to kind of go over some of those themes, how they affected my thinking, how they mean for things moving forward. And I'll also answer some common questions about the show's structure because we put out so much content that folks have a hard time actually keeping up what we're actually saying. So, really kicking this off, I want to talk about the first era of the realignment, basically from, you know, 2015, 2016 to really late 2022, right around the 2022 midterms, which were a surprise, given the fact that Democrats not only kept the Senate performed much better in the House than anyone thought they would, where a lot of those realignment themes really came to place, especially given the strength with suburban voters and the fact that certain populist candidates did not perform as well as they should have, given certain, let's say, election denial issues that came up. The first era was rooted in three events that I really encountered when I first came to DC, obviously. 2015 and 2016, you're looking at the Brexit vote, the rise of Democratic Socialism via the Bernie Sanders campaign, and of course, Donald Trump's prize victory over Hillary Clinton. From that period, I really came away with these big issues and questions that everyone, whether they gratify their policy conclusion that came from these issues, would have to engage with. These include everything from how globalization went wrong, which left whole parts of the country behind, why the seemingly placid Obama years led to a half decade that was defined by populist rage across the globe. I just read two books by Jonathan Alter about the first part of the Obama presidency. The first is The Promise. It's about President Obama's first year, and the second was The Center Holds, Barack Obama and His Enemies. The second book is about the 2012 electoral campaign and its impact going into 2013. And if you guys are looking for a chance just to read a book that will transform you and take you into a place that you just have not been in a while, it's those two. 2009 and 2012, 2013 feel as if they are not merely, let's say, a decade ago, but actually two or even three decades ago. Everything that's being discussed doesn't feel as if it's operating in the same universe we live in today. Things are so different. The assumptions are so different. So once again, thinking of how this war of 2009, how this war of 2013 led to the war of Trump and populism is a deeply important one that I think we spent a lot of time engaging with on the show. Another big topic, the collapse of the post-World War II foreign policy consensus and something that was really illustrated by the buyer's remorse in the electorate after two decades of post-911 forever wars that were broadly perceived as failures. Another

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topic like whether the United States was slash is in a second Cold War with China. Why Donald Trump's Republican Party overperformed with working class voters of color, the roots of the urban first rural divide. Why did elite 2000s era assumptions about the rise of China not play out, the realignment of moderate suburban voters against the Republican Party, the degree to which America's changing demographics advantage one political side over the other, or made certain policy outcomes inevitable, the late stage 2010s tech industries increasing hostile relationship with both the left and the right and more. Those are broad issues that you go through the catalog you will find some type of episode engaging with. And as I plan the next era of the show, it's pretty clear that all the above questions and topics while initially groundbreaking or potentially edgy, especially before COVID, they're now broadly accepted, even in the parts of the Asala corridor where one is most incentivized to deny or ignore them. The Biden administration could have abandoned President Trump's trade war of China. There is definitely a world where make America 2013 again became the rallying cry of the center left. Instead, the Biden administration launched a potentially fatal assault on the Chinese semiconductor industry. And it would have been easy to leave a potential TikTok forced sale slash ban back in 2020, especially given how popular the TikTok app is with the young voters that Biden needs to turn out in 2024. Everything I just said is not necessarily an endorsement of every single action that Biden administration has taken. It's simply the recognition that the underlying assumptions undergirding DC have shifted, which you can really describe as realignment, if you will. The question then is that if most everyone agrees with, or at least takes these questions and realignment error assumptions seriously, what actually should we do? That's the question that part two of the show is focused on answering. And of course, you'll be hearing more to come from this space. All that said, I wanted to share some of my favorite of the first 350 plus episodes the show has put out. I've been getting back into podcasting lately. I go through phases where I'll spend three months listening to audiobooks, and then I'll spend another three months back in podcast, and I'm in the podcast side of the cycle. So I definitely know when you come to a show late, it's kind of hard to find what episode you would really want to listen to that may or may not have aged well. And if you are just trying to catch up with things you missed because of a high production volume, it's always great to get some suggestions. So this list is also included in yesterday's sub stack, but I'm just going to read out some that I think have really aged well and would really provide a great way of understanding this first era of American politics. Once again, you could come up with your own conclusions, but I think these episodes all capture a specific idea or moment that people are really going to think of when we're setting the table. First we've got the episode of Rana for Ruhar, the path to prosperity in a post global world. This was about Rana's book Homecoming. She's a Financial Times columnist. I think the homecoming debate about de-globalization is just incredibly well stated and very, very, very interesting. Next we have Chris Miller, the chip war and the fight for the world's most critical of technology. This is obviously the episode about semiconductors, which are the new oil. I hate to use that phrasing because it's super cliché and saying that he would say data is the new oil. Forgive the cliché in that case just because it is a good shorthand for how

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centered around semiconductors are politics and geopolitics would be for the subsequent future. Next, I had Peter Leiden with his episode about California being the future of American politics. This was an interesting one for me because I don't typically hear a lot of California optimism in the discourse here, but what Peter convinced me we did in all of his writing, which you all should check out, is he took a zoom out from the very specific qualms one could have with San Francisco or Los Angeles or California itself and said, hey, let's look at America in 2050. Does California's underlying strength or do California's underlying strength actually provide an opportunity for optimism? This gets at something that happened when Sagan and I did an episode of biology, Srinivasan, where biology was articulating a lot of problems in the US. My pushback to him in that case was, well, okay, in the late 1970s, we could have listed all these examples of things that go unwell here. Things obviously looked better in the 80s, 90s, and even early 2000s. How does one separate a unique tactical problem from a long-term weakness, key tasks in politics? Next, we have Catherine Boyle of A16Z with her getting serious about American dynamism piece. I think the American dynamism idea and framework, even though it's coming, obviously, from a self-interested venture capital perspective, is just a hyper-usual one. And I found a lot of people who aren't even in venture capital will find it as a useful dynamic for how optimism and innovation can actually serve useful functions. Next, speaking of A16Z, Mark Andreessen on everything. Obviously, that was a pretty wide-ranging episode with Sager. A lot of different topics, hard to really summarize it as you could tell by the horrible title. It's called The Need to Build, Website's Value, Political Realignments, Collapsing Trust, US History, and more. When you see a title like that, you definitely know that I am sort of up late at night and not putting quite the level of editorial control I need on myself there.

Next, you've got Peter Zion. This is actually definitely the biggest episode Sager and Iver did. It's named directly after Peter's latest book. The end of the world is just the beginning. Look, Peter can be pretty hyperbolic, but I think he did a great job of being both entertaining as a guest or also introducing this de-globalization idea. Once again, this is an episode that should be listened to with the Rana Fruhar episode or my episode in December about how geography and regionalization is the future of American politics.

Next, AEI's Matthew Contnetti. What is the future of the right in a realigning America? This episode is all about how the right stands at the midpoint between the 2020 election and the 2024 election. All the underlying issues that Matt has done a great job of looking at especially through his book called The Right really captures how folks need to be thinking about the next few years because depending on how the primary goes, depending on how the 2020 election goes, we're probably going to be in for another few years of intense debates about the future of the conservative movement. So that's always deeply helpful to engage from a foundation of serious thought and analysis as Matthew always provides.

Next, got Evan Osnos. He did a great book on basically called Wildland and it's just sort of a real survey of the United States in the year 2022, looking at how things are, looking at what our problems are, looking at the broader themes. We're also not trying to offer those convenient 10 little policy options at the end. I really enjoy that type of writing and I think he, George Packer, et cetera, do a great job with that type of topic. Next, Amy Chua, her episode on her broader work on tribalism as the fall of Kabul

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happened was just a deeply enjoyable episode. It's definitely going to take a lot of outside slash not normal listener inbound about. For these last few, these y'all should definitely check out of course, Antonio Garcia Martinez on America's 30 Years War was a great job of bringing both Antonio's tech background but also his deep interest in philosophy and history to the fore. Next, got George Packer, another one of those great surveyors of American politics, how America fractured in the way forward. Definitely check out George's books in the bookshop. And last but not least, we've got Frank DiStefano and Michael Lind, both on real linements and populism. Also note, Michael has a book coming out next month and we'll be doing a great episode on that. All that said, I will wrap with just like a really useful slash straightforward articulation of like the other products that we put out and monetize the show through. Because once again, this is some of it said sometimes at the end of an episode, sometimes it's said in the middle or it's said in a sub stack and I want to provide this in a very straightforward way. So here is how we monetize the realignment and how you can or cannot integrate yourself with that. So first, we've got the super cast every two weeks, soccer and I release a question and answer, plus a bit of unpaywalled free discussion for subscribers. This is the primary way that we independently fund the show. And of course, we've got a recording tomorrow or today for the upcoming Friday episode where we'll answer questions. So if you are a subscriber, or you haven't subscribed yet and haven't seen any questions, click the link and check out the stuff at the top of the show notes. You know, this is really, as I said before, the main way we fund and produce the show. It's great that we get the support of Lincoln Network and the Hewitt Foundation, but the only way to maintain editorial independence is to have the knowledge that we can go our own way if necessary. Next, speaking of Hewitt, we've got the Hewitt Foundation when it comes to monetization. So two years ago, I did a great episode with Jen Harris, who was then the director of Hewitt's economy and society program. She gave us a very generous grant to support the show. And the key thing about the show is that the grant means that we don't have to pursue clicks with these episodes. I'll definitely say there are some episodes like Eric Weinstein, Mark Andreessen, or a episode with someone like, say, Peter Zion that's obviously going to really be a banger and put out really big clicks. But what's cool about I think both this format and what I think needs to be done right now is you need venues where I'm not just thinking, okay, how do I get this the maximum clicks possible versus thinking, okay, we've got a really dedicated set of listeners here. This show is frankly, like shockingly popular for being a think tank podcast. How do we really deliver like decision makers and people who are actively thinking for these episodes, content that's worthwhile for them. So as we seek to kind of get that balance together, having a foundation via Hewitt Foundation is super helpful. Finally, the last big question I get is, why have you launched a paid edition of the sub stack? When there's already a subscription supercast, you all are throwing so many different subscriptions at us during a difficult time. So look, I'll just say up front, it's a tough economy. We all have way too many subscriptions going on right now. There is zero expectation that folks who are listening are going to like listen to or pay for every single thing we put out there. So want to just get that out of the way. Secondly, I'll just note some like technical things that kind of drive me to think this way. So one, the supercast and the supercast Q&A episode, that's really

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Sager and my Joan project. So obviously not only do we release the exclusive content together as co-hosts of the interviews and discussions, but we actually co-own the LLC that owns the actual podcast. So I launched the paid version of the newsletter because I wanted a venue for my work that's just totally independent of Sager, a place where I can write or at least figure out how to write. I've never spent much time writing. It's a thing I definitely regret for not focusing on as much during high school and college, but it's based where I could put out good product, develop my ideas, all those good things. And for tax and liability purposes, I did not want to involve Sager because the last thing someone wants when someone is not working on a product is to actually have to pay taxes on any revenue that's generated from that project. So the way it works is the sub stack will send out a subscriber only post every two weeks on Fridays, which is typically going to alternate with the supercast. As I mentioned previously, of course, you have the supercast subscribers who paid the generous lifetime membership of 500 for that lifetime. So they are automatically given access to the paid newsletter as well. I just threw a lot at you all, but I just want to say I'm so thankful for everyone's support up to this point. I'm excited to come back with a new episode on Thursday and I appreciate everyone giving the flexibility to really rethink things and figure out what I'm trying to do here because I want this podcast to go on for the more than foreseeable future. I have another 350 episodes in me, but I really need to take the time to find out what I'm trying to say when I'm trying to figure out. And what I desperately just want to figure out is what should we actually do now that we have these realignment ideas now that we know that the working class is up for grabs. Now that we know that suburban voters aren't voting the way they voted 20 years ago, what is the actual politics? What are the actual policies and how does one actually perform in that environment? Because it's kind of weird to watch someone like Max Frost, the Gen Z congressman from Florida come into power because I'm just at the point in my career, saugurs as well, where we are just a tiny bit older than people who may be entering into the political system. So trying to offer a avenue or a venue for them engaging in politics and these ideas is deeply important. I want to say a huge thank you to all the listeners and of course, again, that Rook and Hewlett Foundation for getting me this far. Hope you enjoyed this conversation. And of course, we'll see you on Thursday.