



Discussion: Democracy in Crisis or Democracy at Work? Two Views on the Direction of European Politics

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This is a transcript of the video-recording of the discussion, which took place at the NECE Conference in Glasgow, UK, on 25 October 2019.

Stephen M. Carroll: We're here with the very simple question of, is democracy in crisis or democracy at work? This is a discussion that might immediately bring Brexit to mind, but I think there's lots of other things across Europe that we could apply this question to. There has been so many developments, so many events for the past couple of years. You may think of Julio Jones in France, even something like maybe the European elections being a good example of big changes and what feels certainly like a rapid pace of change that's happening in many political systems across Europe.

We're going to try to include as many of your views as we can. There will be plenty of time for questions in this panel as well. I'd like to get an idea of how people feel about this question, whether you think we're in crisis or we're at work. I'm going to ask you in just a show of hands in a moment, just to tell me how you feel about this question before we start discussing it.

With me here, Niccolò Milanese, he's the director of European Alternatives. An organization that promotes democracy, equality and culture beyond the nation state with over a decade experience in civil society activism and your book published last year is entitled *Citizens of Nowhere: How Europe can be Saved from Itself*. David Goodhart as well, journalist, author and head of demography at the Policy Exchange think tank. Founded *Prospect Magazine* here in the UK, and is formerly of the Central Think Tank, DEMAS. Your latest book is called *The Road to Somewhere, The Populous Vote and The Future of Politics*.

You're here notionally given opposing positions to argue. If I can ask to get an idea of how you feel about this question. As a show of hands, who feels that democracy in Europe is in crisis? Who feels that democracy is working and everything that we're seeing happening across Europe? Okay. That's a pretty good spread. Who thinks both? [laughs] There we go.

[laughter]





Stephen: I think we're looking forward to hearing some of your questions and comments a bit later on as well. We're going Niccolò with you. If you can give us an idea in a nutshell of why do you think democracy is in crisis?

Niccolò: Thanks very much and it's a pleasure to be here. I want to just preface my remarks by saying that I'm consciously aware that we're all men sitting up here. I say that just because I think that one of the things that's going on in recent years is a kind of misogynistic backlash. It's something that's seriously problematic for democracy. I also believe that we're fine to discuss such issues without having to have people directly concerned. I believe that as a man I can talk about gender issues or as a white person, I can talk about race issues and so on. I'm not someone who is so obsessed with identity politics that I think I have to be, but I think that the very least one can do is acknowledge that dimension of things.

I wanted to make that as a preface. I think that democracy in a certain sense is in crisis. It is the constant contestation of power, of legitimacy, and of the ordering of society. I think that there was a period in Western Europe, at least, one can easily think of it as the '90s and the early 2000s where politics was too consensual and there was no real alternative offer. One could be pleased these days, that there are plenty of alternative offers and people engaging in politics and so on.

I am, to a certain extent, pleased with all of that new activity. Nonetheless, the crucial question for me is a little bit, if it's running into a dead end. If the signs are that our democratic institutions and the energy that is being put in by young people notably but not only by young people, is leading to a kind of democratic renewal or renaissance, or if it's actually heading towards a wide spread sense of frustration and a system that is incapable of moving on, and therefore, very easily hijacked by other kinds of actors.

I think that European democracy, and by that I mean both democracy in the member states of the European Union and European democracy as a whole, is being hijacked by-- to put it bluntly, neo-liberal authoritarians who are taking advantage of the fact that there is increasing disagreement in society to actually undermine the democratic institutions we have, so they're incapable of themselves of reaching decisions unless they're dramatically transformed in an authoritarian direction.

This is a potentially tragic direction for European democracies to go into. Clearly speaking here about this you might think immediately of figures like Boris Johnson, but if one were to think of the situation in Hungary or in Croatia or in Poland, I think the situation is worse in terms of democratic systems being taken over. I think that there's a deep-seated reason behind this. That comes to the subject of this whole conference, is what I would say, is a tragic failure of political education over several decades. Very clear in the case of the United Kingdom and that to a certain extent, is the origins of my own activism.

It seems to me if you were to think practically about how to bring political change or to fight for various things one might believe in, whether it's climate change or fighting inequalities or a whole host of other issues, if you were to think practically and seriously about those issues over the past couple of decades, one would have to realize that the institutions of British democracy are insufficient. They are insufficient





for the very simple reason that they're embedded in a much wider European system of decision making.

One can have two reactions to that state of affairs. One can say, "Well, it's horribly undemocratic. We want to return to a British system of decision making which we feel like we understand." I happen to think, I always have thought that that is a totally unrealistic opposition. One can only achieve it by inflicting considerable damage on the social fabric of the country. The other option is to say, "Well, look we have to learn. Perhaps we even have to invent how to do democracy beyond borders."

I think throughout Europe, and that's a legitimate complaint that plenty of people who, for example, voted leave, could make-- throughout Europe they have been plenty of people, who have been quite happy with citizens being shut out of decision making with the European dimension, have done nothing to try and encourage or inform or educate citizens in how to do it, but that is not an excuse for not learning how to do it and informing oneself, and so because that hasn't adequately happened yet, I think we now see beginnings of it, but because that learning hasn't happened and I see a danger of actually people just giving up with learning how to do European democracy on a continental scale. For that reason, I think democracy is in crisis around Europe.

Stephen: Lots to unpack and digest there. David, your position in this argument is that democracy is working. Tell us what you think.

David: Yes. I think what we've been experiencing, particularly dramatically in the last few years, indeed, I suppose really starting in 2016. In fact, the last time I attended this conference was in Zagreb in 2016 and while we were there, Donald Trump was elected President of the United States. It was rather a dramatic moment. I think 2016 Brexit, Trump would obviously have seen European populism emerging for many years prior to that, but I think all of these things are perfectly legitimately described as a kind of democratic re-balancing.

We have had an extraordinary set of changes. Really, starting I guess, with the end of the Cold War in the late '80s, early '90s, the opening up of our economies, the opening up of our societies, dramatic escalation of the pace of social change and a pretty well complete domination of our democracies, of our societies, of our politics by a set of interests that I have described in the book I wrote a couple of years ago, as the interests of the anywhere classes.

We're not just talking about metropolitan elites, we're talking about 25%, 30% of the population, essentially, the educated mobile parts of the population, who tend to gravitate towards openness, autonomy, tend to be comfortable with many of the changes of the modern world, partly because they have instituted them or a political class is overwhelmingly drawn, from what I call the anywhere class, has instituted, whether it's the economy, we call it the knowledge economy. It works in the interest of people who are highly qualified.

Certainly in the UK, not true of all European countries certainly, true in this country we've massively expanded higher education, quintessential institutions of the anywhere classes, continued to neglect vocational and technical education. It's an





old story in the UK, and in particular in England. We've also seen a huge-- Not only did the supply chain move to China or Vietnam or wherever, dramatically de-industrialization in most of our societies in Europe, but we also have seen a rapid sort of de-politicization, a sort of technocratic de-politicization of modern democracy.

Again, and this is something that most anywheres feel comfortable with, but partly because they sort of understand the trade-offs that are some of the things that Niccolò was talking about. Obviously, a lot of political issues transcend national borders. A lot of decisions are made in committees of the WTO, or the committees of the EU and our democracy is certainly not caught up with turning that into something that national electorates can feel a connection to.

Actually, this is probably one of the main differences between me and Niccolò, I don't think it's really practical ever to imagine a sort of global policy in which all of these different democracies with all of their different languages, sort of sit around and hold these committees of the WTO to account. I think these things can only really be done at a national level. Obviously, they have to be supranational organizations, and they have to be held to account as it were through national democratic processes.

I think what's largely been happening is a legitimate and overdue attempt by the most excluded part of the electorate to throw a spanner in the works. That's part of what democracy is about it. The other lot have been running the show, and because all of those things I was talking about, the way the economy has changed, the way education has changed, the way politics has changed, all of those things have been largely the interest of the mobile educated classes.

Those educated mobile classes have a center left form and they have a center right form, so people have not effectively had any chance to, or very little chance to protest about the things that have been happening. Indeed, for much of the time in the last 25 years, incomes have been rising pretty fast. A lot of things have been happening people haven't been very happy about, but they've been through compensating effects too. I think a lot of that came to an end in 2008 with the financial crisis, and indeed some of the things, I think much of what we're talking about, is essentially to do with human psychology, to do with status and respect and recognition, and a feeling of that, a lack of those things-- I think it's much less an economic thing.

Indeed, part of what people I think are reacting against is, or rather sort of responding to in ways, the fact that our politics has shifted from a sort of essentially socioeconomic axis, to a much more socio-cultural axis. Anywhere politicians find it very difficult to grasp that, I think, they tend to be utilitarian, rationalist, economic. I was very struck listening to David Miliband speaking at the LSE a few months ago. In fact, it was the third anniversary of Brexit.

He was asked by the person who was chairing the meeting, whether he thought that labor had any responsibility for the 2016 Brexit vote. He replied purely in economic terms. He said, "Well, yes, perhaps we could have done better on economic growth. Yes, perhaps we could have done better on inequality." Not a mention of immigration, national identity, rapid social change and how that discomforts people. Not a word about it. He had three years to think about it, and this great political brain





had come up with exactly nothing, in my view. I think that illustrates perfectly the sort of mess we got into.

Just a couple of other very quick points. Yes, this is partly about the research and the national social contracts, and nothing wrong with that. A national social contract doesn't mean xenophobia or hostility to other nations, obviously. Except for the crazy people, everybody accepts the world is more interdependent and that needs to be reflected somehow in our politics, but we can't reflect that by negating national democracy. It has to build up on top of national democracy.

National democracy has to remain the foundation, and that is what a lot of people feel has been eroded, perhaps particularly oddly enough, in the UK and the US. I think it's no surprise in some ways that the most dramatic populist events, Brexit and Trump, have happened in Britain and America, and much less so in continental Europe. Salvini perhaps might challenge Brexit or Trump, but anyway, he's now gone. I think the reason for that is actually partly to do with proportional representation, that most continental European countries has been able to absorb, and to some extent, domesticate, is it worthy, the populist voice because they've been in parliaments, they've been indeed in five or six or seven countries.

Populist parties have actually been in governments. Not in every case, but I think the general direction of travel has been towards a kind of more mature forms of populism. In some cases, the parties have split between the sort of true believers and the moderates, and I think that's a good thing. I don't really recognize what Niccolò is talking about when he talks about neo-liberal authoritarianism, and certainly he doesn't have any echoes in this country.

I now work at the Central Right Think Tank with Policy Exchange, just in terms of the neo-liberal aspect of it. I don't know if you've noticed recently, but the priorities for a post-Brexit conservative government are all essentially social democratic priorities, I would say. Socializing adult care, building a hell of a lot more houses, including public housing, and investing hugely in non-university forms of post-school education, particularly the Effy sector, which has been so horribly neglected in recent decades.

My own Think Tank produced a report a few months ago arguing essentially for the socialization of adult social care, completing the welfare state, and he had a preface written by that top-hatted capitalist monster, Jacob bloody Rees-Mogg. The only idea that these are neo-liberal authoritarians, the authoritarians who desperately want an election, I think we do have to distinguish between social conservatism and authoritarianism, and indeed, between legitimate populism and illegitimate populism.

We are now in a state of disequilibrium. We had the anywhere liberal dominated economic and social and cultural policy for 25 years or so. We've had to push back against it. We're now in a no man's land, if you like, and we're sort of reaching towards trying to find a new equilibrium, and that may take us some time. I'm starting my final point. While I'm on the whole lot, I welcome these changes. There are some ugly aspects to it, but I think the thing that worries me most about this is that it's actually harder to split the difference on socio-cultural value differences than it is on socio-economic differences.





Somewhat, we can we can argue about levels of public spending. Someone on the left wants very high public spending, someone on the right much lower. Someone on the left wants to tax rich people 90%, someone on the right at 50%, so you compromise on 65%, wherever. There's a tried and tested method of coming to a consensus. It's much harder when you're talking about things like immigration and national borders, and national identity, and family, and so on. It's much harder on those issues to split the difference, but I think we're just going to have to find ways of doing it. Thanks.

Stephen: Okay, thank you very much. It's the good part about having an hour and a half. Plenty of time to unpack everything that we've just talked about. Niccolò, I'm interested in this idea, the national identity playing such a large part in so many of the kind of these big political events we've been discussing. How do you see us moving-- Do you see us moving on from that? Do you think this is going to stay as part of the future vision, or do you think that there is this possibility that we can move to the nowhere idea of where we share much more and those perhaps cleavages become minimized?

Niccolò: Look, I think it's possible that nationalist politics stays with us for some period of time. I think it's even likely. I don't think that's, by any means, a desirable state of affairs, because I think that these nationalist dreams are nationalist illusions, at least in many places in Europe, if not everywhere. I'm willing to accept that some places might need to have their national autonomy. I think that the danger-

Stephen: We are in Scotland.

Niccolò: I'm well aware. I think that the danger with sort of returning to 19th century visions of liberal internationalism is that we don't appreciate the ways in which the world has changed. I agree with David that the world has changed, and specifically, and actually, David, said that one of the biggest differences between me and him is that I might believe in global democracy or so. It's interesting that in the UK context, global democracy and European affairs are very quickly allied as if they were the same thing.

I actually don't think that global democracy is plausible thing anytime soon. I do think there has been a very substantial and real European integration, which is personified by a lot of Europeans who have moved around, by freedom of movement. You may not like it very much, you might even wish that it hadn't have happened, but it has happened, and if you just regard such people as an afterthought, as something which is a problem to be dealt with, but sort of necessary sacrifice in a way to restore national democracy, I think you're in a very dangerous position indeed.

I think that it's important to see the degrees of integration that happens specifically in Europe, and understands that's trying to pull out of them, is perhaps possible but is extraordinarily damaging. The idea that one can try it and continue to sensibly protect, for example, worker's rights, is the kind of performance that only someone like Boris Johnson has the gumption to try to pull off. It seems like only people like David have the credibility to believe. The idea that Jacob Rees-Mogg with his top hat and Boris Johnson are actually interested in upgrading social and environmental rights and so on, really seems to me to be slightly deluded.





I think that for those of us who believe in a humane Europe which tries to fight against inequality and so on, there is no option other than trying to invent politics beyond the nation state. I think there's a very clear example of that, which will provoke a disagreement between myself and David, I expect, that I don't think there's any way you can avoid the dishumanity of people dying at our borders without trying to invent politics that go beyond our borders.

I simply think that a vision of national democracies depends on reinforced borders and the consequence of that is unavoidably in our world. People dying in the Mediterranean or in lorries, and I think that's a debasing situation for all of us and I think that our politics should be better than that. I also think our politics can be better than that. One of the promises of the European Union, I'm full of criticisms of the European Union, is that it has started to invent the possibility of democracy beyond borders.

Never in human history have more resources been put into ensuring people from Latvia can understand the concerns of people from Portugal, and compromise and then decisions can be taken together. To kind of say such a project is impossible or undesirable, because largely for reasons unconnected with the European Union, there are all kinds of inequalities and vocational training and so on has been forgotten in the UK, all of which could be very valid points. Seems to me to be a totally unjustified kind of jump. Overall, I can see a lot of sense in the kinds of things that David writes and says, but I think that the conclusions that are drawn from them are well-exaggerated and dangerously exaggerated.

Stephen: Please, I feel like you deserve a-- I'm so glad you're disagreeing.

David: I think that was a marvelous bit of high anywhere sophistry, that the answer to illegal immigration is to have no borders. That's great. That's going to go down very well. Obviously, I think that you have a political economic block called the European Union. It requires some form of democracy, although I think it was a mistake ever actually, in retrospect, to have created an autonomous European Parliament. It would have been far better surely to have had representatives from national parliaments in some sort of EU Parliamentary Conclave, and that would have produced--

Some countries do this already, actually. Some countries do have a proper system of accountability between their national parliaments and decisions that their own nation takes in the European Union, but many countries, including this one, don't have that system. It would have been far better, I think, to have had a system of European democracy that was actually based on the real democracy. It's what remain, and will for the foreseeable future remain, the real democracies, which is the nation state level.

All of these issues to do with free movement are somewhat separate from that question about how democracy is managed. The number of people who have taken advantage of free movement has gone up, obviously, particularly since the arrival of the former communist states into the European Union. It's gone up from, I think about 1% to about 3% of European Union citizens now living and working in a country other than their own. We're still talking about an absolute tiny proportion of





people. I think in retrospect, it was probably wrong, given the enormous gulf in per capita income between the former communist countries and most of Western Europe.

I think it's probably a mistake to, a particular mistake on the part of the British government, which of course, didn't use the seven-year delaying period that it could have done to allow that movement as soon as the countries had joined in 2004. It'd been far better to play some sort of, when your country's reached sort of 60% or 65% of the European average, then free movement becomes more feasible. I don't think this has helped create a greater sense of European solidarity. There is a small degree of solidarity expressed through regional funding, through essentially minor forms of redistribution from rich countries to poorer countries in the European Union-

Stephen: [inaudible 00:29:09] culture policies is a fairly major redistribution of-

David: A lot of it goes to very rich countries like France, actually. I'm sort of thinking more of the redistribution from rich countries to, say, the former communist countries, and I would welcome that. Let's look at this in perspective. Germany was happy to spend, what was it, \$1 trillion reunifying with East Germany, and it was very, very unhappy about spending a very, very small fraction of that supporting the Greek economy.

Solidarity within nation states is a very precious and often quite weak thing between classes, between regions, between generations. It exists and it's far, far stronger within the nation state than it is between nation-states. We have to worry about cultivating it within our nation states before leaping ahead and imagining it. The truth is, most people who have come to Britain to work and live in recent years are not thinking themselves as great citizens of a new Europe, they have a pretty instrumental attitude to it. Not everybody. Some of your friends do celebrate this experience as a flowering of European identity.

You've just had to look at what happens when the value of the pound sinks by 15%, hundreds of thousands of people leave. They love it so much. They've decided to leave because the pound has fallen 15%. Let's just keep these things in perspective. This is a pretty instrumental economic thing.

Stephen: Okay. I think we've identified plenty of problems and issues that are in existence now. Let's think about some solutions. How do you change the perception of people who move around to create the European identity? What tools do you take now to try and instill that? That's going to stick though.

Niccolò: I think it's a very well-phrased question, Stephen, because I think that taking account of what the general population thinks is obviously a very important thing to do for anybody who's involved in making political proposals. That's part of what living in democracy means. However, accepting the terms in which people spontaneously express, for example, their frustrations as in themselves legitimate ways of expressing their frustrations, or productive political ways of expressing their frustrations, I think is a different matter.





I think that migration is a very good example. It is surely true that many people in this country and other countries will say they're very uncomfortable with migration and the changes that it brings. This has to be taken into account. My attitude towards such sentiments is to try to re-frame the problems and saying, for example, people moving around is not the problem. People will do that. They always have done and they will continue to do so.

The problem is one of government and the way the benefits of people moving around are distributed, that overall may bring benefits but those benefits are not equally distributed or fairly distributed throughout the population in terms of the investment in skills and capacities of people to be able to take advantage and benefit from the great diversity and exchanges that are created by people moving around. The problem is not one of the migrant moving around, the problem is the way a government is dealing with such issues.

Stephen: When you say redistribute, how would you do that? How do you-- By forcing people to move to a certain part of the country?

Niccolò: No. I meant to be clear, I mean distributing the economic benefits of migration. One hears is a lot in the UK, and not only in the UK, that migrants coming to the UK benefits the UK economy. It's surely true but the economic benefits of that is not fairly distributed amongst the UK population and consequences that you end up with some people who are already in very difficult circumstances having to deal with some of the costs that come with migration, because there are undeniably are in certain parts of cities and elsewhere, where you might get concentrations of people who don't speak the same languages, who with changes, as David likes to point out, certain kinds of social bonds and capital are undermined. There are costs associated with migration.

The overall benefit in terms of economic terms for the country is positive, but that positive economic benefit is not re-channeled back into communities that are having to experience the cost. You have a very unfair distribution of the costs and benefits of freedom of movement, for example, in a country like the UK. The problem is not the people moving around, the problem is the way the costs and benefits of that happening are distributed. That's the problem with policy, policy of the UK Government and policy of the European Union. I hope I'm relatively clear.

Stephen: I think I'm getting there, yes.

Niccolò: My approach to these issues is to try to take seriously what everybody has to say but use my own practical judgment to propose what I see as a productive way forward.

Stephen: David, is that going to be politically viable to be able to do that? Do you think that there's a way to make that redistribution happen in a way that--

David: No. This is thinly disguised Leninism. The poor dears are suffering from false consciousness. They don't realize that it's in their interest to have mass immigration. They simply haven't got around to realizing that, but of course, all of the citizenship education is going to put them right. No. For a start that you've got the economics





wrong, it is not enormously beneficial. The people who benefit most from large scale immigration are the immigrants. Try readers reading from them.

That's not going to-- I know they also use benefits. Actually, many of them are in very low paid jobs. No, I'm going to write a book about this. I know the numbers and it's basically neutral. The economic effects of large-scale immigration in this country in recent years has basically been neutral. It's not as if reducing immigration would cause us-- productivity has slumped. The economy hasn't exactly been roaring along in this period. No, there is no great immigration dividend to redistribute, but even if there was, 60%, 65% of the population think that immigration is too high or much too high. We're not going to just persuade them that they're wrong.

They think that. They feel that. They see the queues for housing for public services. They don't own the whole. Some of them are xenophobia, most of them are not They just think this is not making my life better. The competition for public services and so on and the neighborhood changing too fast. These are perfectly legitimate themes, and because mainstream politics was not representing those feelings, the populist political entrepreneurs emerged to represent them.

Stephen: Is that something that the electoral system issue that you mentioned, proportion representation, can that solve that issue? The arguments of UKIP in this country that they didn't have an MP or Nigel Farage couldn't get elected as an MP and couldn't get elected easily as an MEP, can proportional representation, could that have changed, do you think, the courses?

David: I think if we'd had 40 or 50 UKIP MPs in Parliament, we might never have had a referendum and a Brexit because the people would have felt that that voice, that socially conservative voice was heard in the corridors power but people didn't. People were given account here. This was the weakness of the two-party system that excluded a two-party first past the post system that excluded that voice from politics. I think actually many European countries have not done a much better job of absorbing it.

I think the Swedish political class, I think we made a terrible mistake in excluding the Sweden Democrats but nonetheless, the Sweden Democrats, despite being excluded, have a huge impact on Swedish politics. The Swedish border is now essentially closed as a result of the Sweden Democrats. They've had a-- gradually the other parties have reluctantly shifted to represent what is the overwhelming majority of public opinion in Sweden. Liberals have been very illiberal in many ways and very elitist in their thinking, in their politics in much of the last 25 years. That period has come to an end.

I think what we're now seeing as it were to anywhere political class is divided between those who feel admonished-- Oh God, actually, perhaps we should have been listening. We are after all politicians in democracies. Perhaps we should have been listening to what people say and those who are in a way like Niccolò who are doubling down and saying, "No, we are right. We are the moral leaders." They're all-- I'm sure you wouldn't say this, but some people would say, they're all stupid or xenophobic, or whatever and we're going to continue to ignore them.





Stephen: Niccolò, I'm not putting those words to your mouth.

Niccolò: I'm happy we discuss Leninists as a--

Stephen: Coming back to this point of citizenship education then, that's what we're here to talk about. How do you provide that variety of views? How do you see that being something that can be developed into creating? If not people who necessarily agree with either of the two of you, but someone that at least you can see the spectrum of opinions that are right there and be more informed, and thus have a well held opinion for whatever opinion that turns out to be.

Niccolò: As a matter of fact, and this will play into what David was trying to characterize me as, I am someone who believes that it's possible to learn from history, to have historical knowledge, and that means also believing in historical truth. I really think that citizenship education needs to be able to explain that some things have been learned from history, and there is still some truth in the world, even if there's people who contest those things.

I think the courage of politicians, educators, and broadcasters to speak the truth is extremely important and we don't speak enough about it. I think that, in a certain sense, we've had a great public debate about lying and fake news, but not enough of the other or important side of that, which is about telling the truth. There are some facts about, for example, the way the European Union works and the consequences that it has. Saying, "Well, all of this is open for debate, and that's what democracy is about," is a travesty of both education, democracy, and to my mind, citizenship.

I think that that's something very important, is standing up for truth and also historical learning. There are some things in the experience of Europe-- By the way, there's some of the things that justify the creation of the European Union that I take as moral learnings from the history of Europe and continually trying to replay the 1930s or whatever your preferred dimension of the epoch of European politics is, is a very dangerous thing to do, and we should call it out. I think that that is an important thing. The other thing that I believe, and here there may be some shared ground between myself and David-

Stephen: Which we're all grateful for.

Niccolò: I do think that education in general has become, as indeed our conception of science, has become too obsessed with what I could call theoretical knowledge, and not sufficiently valorising practical knowledge. One dimension of that, and it's something that David has written about, and I appreciate, is about vocational training and valorising people who do vocational work.

A dimension that I'm actually more interested in is about practical judgment. Aristotle talks about the difference between theoretical judgment and practical judgment, and I believe that our politics has become quite dominated by theoretical issues and a theoretical way of presenting things, which does not lead to practical conclusions. It goes back to what I was trying to explain at the beginning, that as a young person living in this country and then living in other countries, my practical sense of how-- if I'm going to go about changing things politically, as a practical matter, it's not just





about persuading national governments or even-- Primarily national governments, it's also about influencing all kinds of other decision making entities.

David might not think, and I would agree with him, that there's going to be a democratic WTO, but they're sure as hell making decisions, and they need to be influenced. This is a practical matter of politics. I think that this practical knowledge amongst the citizenry has regressively, in some ways, disappeared. It's disappeared to some extent in generational terms. Earlier generations had to fight for their democracies and that knowledge hasn't always been passed on.

I think also the practical ways of people working together is a very living issue for me, in terms of trying to organize people as activists. The practical capacity to work together and coordinate and compromise and all of these kinds of things, is not as strong as I think it used to be. There ought to be research done about why these capacities start to disappear. I think that the nature of contemporary capitalism and its atomizing tendency is one aspect of that.

I think that's the fact that people don't have experience in collective experiences such as being in the army when it was obligatory to be in the army, also means that they don't have this practical experience of working together in big groups. This is something that has very immediate impacts for political mobilization.

Stephen: I'm going to come to questions in just a moment, just as you get ready. Is that an argument that rings true with you? Should we be teaching people how to protest?

David: Yes, I think we probably do, in a way, agree to some extent on this. What's happened about this sort of prolonged Brexit experience is in some way a bit depressing and dismaying, although not entirely. I was in Vienna in March, we were just saying earlier, and a part of me felt sort of quite proud. All the people I knew in Vienna were absolutely glued to their televisions every evening, watching this sort of strange political drama going on in London. I sort of thought, since Shakespeare, we've actually been the providers of political drama for Europe, and that's rather a noble [crosstalk] Nobody's died, unlike the Gilets Jaunes protests.

Stephen: Well, there was Jo Cox--

David: Since the referendum, no one has died. Obviously, the reason why it's taken so long is because it's very difficult to combine direct democracy with representative democracy, particularly when there is no majority in the parliament. That's essentially why it's been so stymied, but I think there is something underneath that, that you were talking about Niccolò, which is that we spent--

I think this is a failure of liberalism. It's not just down to capitalism, it is that we also spent the last 25 years not just opening markets, but also making our societies very much more, we're pushing back the boundaries of individual freedom, constantly saying to ourselves how marvelous diversity is, that we all live by different goals and gods, and isn't that a wonderful thing? Actually then, when it comes down to finding common ground, finding a consensus, we've disappeared down so many different rabbit holes that we can't actually come back together and find some sort of minimal





consensus, common interest in the national interest. I think that's as much a failure of modern liberalism as it is a failure of capitalism, indeed much more a failure of modern liberalism than capitalism.

Stephen: Okay, I think it's time to hear from you. What I'll try to do is take a couple of questions at once. If you could tell us briefly who you are as well, that's always helpful.

Sophie: Thanks. My name is Sophie Porschlegel. I work on European Politics and Institutions at the European Policy Center in Brussels. I'm one of those people in the Brussels bubble. I've got a comment to everything, but I'll try to keep myself short. The first one is a reaction straight to what you just said. We should remember that Jo Cox has died, and in Northern Ireland people might die. It's not an issue to be laughed about, I think.

David: I'm not laughing about it. I said since the referendum, nobody's died.

Sophie: Not yet.

David: We've had people die as a result of Gilets Jaunes protests. That's the point I made.

Sophie: Yes, good.

David: The main discussion was about parliamentary procedure and nobody has died.

Sophie: Okay. The one thing I wanted to say is that, I feel that the discussion talking about neo-liberalism uses concepts that, in my opinion, are a little traditional to explain the issues we have. Just to go back on the redistribution, I think that you could say, "Okay, we're going to balance out economic injustices," but I haven't heard the words of climate crisis, of changing the GDP to include wellbeing of circular economy, all these topics that I in my opinion, the ones we should use to make sure that we have a transformative democracy that changes the concepts. Just that. Because I'm a little bit of a nerd concerning institutional design of the EU, I have two questions for you.

The first one is for Niccolò Milanese. You talked about having practical measures on how to implement transnational democracy, and I would be very interested in knowing how do you plan to do this because I work on the subject and I know it's been extremely difficult to have party politics in the European Parliament that works. It's very difficult to have a European Council that is not based on inter-governmental issues and national interests. I'd be really interested in knowing practically what you'd like to change.

For you, David Goodhart, you talked about the fact that you'd like to see European Parliament done out of national parliaments. You know that we have parliamentary conferences such as COSEC, for instance, that have been very inefficient as they don't work properly. I'd like to know how do you imagine this working because I know it's not perfect, the EU has never been perfect, but it's one of those two generous





projects we have had that are extremely unique in the world, and have still managed to keep peace in Europe for the past 70 years.

Stephen: I'll let you answer those questions because I think there's a lot to sort of unpack. Niccolò, do you want to start with that one about trends and transactional election?

Niccolò: I'm pleased you made the point about deaths. I also think that rising hate crime and other things, and indeed there may have been some deaths which may not be directly attributed to Brexit, but are attributed to hate crime in the past years. I think that that point to my mind is well made.

I don't consider neoliberalism as in itself a traditional term, but of course, I would agree with you, and I'm very interested in ideas like Green New Deal and the ways in which we can focus on well-being and so on. All of that, I simply accept.

The difficult question about how to democratize the European Union, I'm someone who has always believed in transnationalists and worked for them. I think that it's dangerous to think that there could be a real democracy without having parties. There are some people who think about the future of democracy and see it as a matter of deliberation and consultation and so on. I'm not one of them. I think there has to be parties which represent adequately, as adequately as they can, the conflicting interests which are actually in society.

Part of the problem at the moment is that our political parties are totally out of sync with the conflicting interests which are in society. That joins up a little bit with what David was saying, was that maybe with electoral reform, you could try to get parties which better represent the conflicting interests. I think that goes at a national level also goes at a European level, and as you know, the electoral rules for the European Union, in terms of the European Parliament, that basically incoherent at the moment because they're based on national rules. I don't think it in any way represents transnational currents of opinion, which nonetheless, I think exist.

I think that the European Council, despite, I would say some good intentions, has done a terrible job of building on what were to me, the most European of European elections that took place earlier on in this year. There was an uptake in participation. There were European issues being discussed. Not always adequate or very well, but nonetheless, a lot of people were talking and thinking about Europe, the parties were making proposals about them.

I think that the European Council has destroyed a lot of that momentum in its politicking around who should be the European Commission president and on other issues. I think there's a matter of changes of attitudes there. I think it's a lack of awareness actually, because I think that many of the people in the European Council had good intentions but they don't realize the damage that they are doing to European Democracy.

The final thing I would say to try and answer your question briefly, is that the European Union needs to understand that democracy is not all about rules and institutions. It's also about the way in which a potentially unruly citizenry can contest





and interact with political authority. That is something that the European Union has tried to hide away from. In a certain sense, it's an understandable reason why it's tried to subtract itself from real politics, and perhaps that was a condition of its success in the early days, because otherwise, it would have got pulled back into national rivalries.

I think that now, the price of avoiding the reemergence of national rivalries has to be to acknowledge that there is a European citizenry that is politicized and can interact and contest in a much more straightforward way, the decisions of the European institutions. Now there's different ways that can be achieved around transparency and so on, which I won't go into now. We can talk about it later.

Stephen: David, do you want to take that question on the cooperation between-

David: Very quickly, I think this-- What I call the democratic rebalancing, has been, I think very, very substantially a reaction to a lack of voice to feelings of the weakness of national democratic accountability, as more and more power has dispersed to European institutions, to the WTO, and also domestically. Judicial activism, independent central banks, and so on. More and more of democratic decision making has been shuffled away into expert decision making.

You can bet your bottom dollar that when experts make a decision, they will make a decision according to, in my language, anywhere interests. I think one could make a very, very strong case for that. This is about--

Brexit, you could say, is a form of sort of national localism. It's saying, "Actually, we want to bring back democratic accountability closer to where we are, to people that we know and can point to, institutions that we understand. Now, obviously, we live in an interdependent world, and we need international institutions, and those institutions need a degree of democratic accountability too, but I think, like I say, with the European Parliament example, I think, the more kind of lock it into the existing institutions of national democracy, the better. I think the European Parliament has been a great success.

I also don't think the European Union is responsible for keeping the peace in Europe over the last 70 years, but that's another debate. NATO has kept the peace. European Union has probably contributed, to some extent, through the interlocking of our economies and our societies, but I think it's a subsidiary reason.

Stephen: Okay. I'm going to try and take a couple of questions.

Tony Venables: Tony Venables. I think, David, one difficulty with your proposal of going back to a European Parliament of delegates run, elected European Parliament was that it was tried. That's the '60s and '70s. I think it's the first time I've heard anyone suggest going back to that. I have a question, more precise question about what I understood to be your vision of things. That you think a lot of this is about, in a sense, repatriating democracy to the national level.

Really recognizing that's the bedrock. I think, in a way, we all agree to an extent with that, that that must be right. At the same time, you say you've got this sort of





expansion of all these committees, scientific networks, et cetera. The problem is, it's just a practical question, how the hell are you going to control them? Because if you're only controlling them from your national democratic base, what do you do if other countries are not controlling to the same extent? This is part of the problem with the EU at the moment, I would say.

I don't think this is about recognizing that there's 18 million people living and working in other-- Countries are demanding more of a political voice, I think it's actually, it's a much broader base for some transnational democracy with the internet. Anyone is expecting now not to go through their national governments and parliaments to control what's going on in Brussels or Geneva, or somewhere or New York. They expect to have much more of a direct say. What are your proposals? I just don't see it. I just don't see where you're taking us.

David: We do have delegates. We do have national delegate at the WTO. We do have national--

Tony Venables: They're not under democratic control, they're government representatives.

David: Yes, but governments are on the democratic control. What we need to do is make those processes more open and visible, because obviously we do need a degree of international democracy. It's going to be relatively thin layer on top of the real national democracies, but they should be regarding themselves much more as national delegates, and we should have much more of a discussion about what position they have been taking on the WTO or whatever it is.

Peter Markovic: Thank you both. I don't remember a discussion provoking so much. Support on one side and fury on the other, thank you. It's been quite a successful panel I'd say. I'm Peter from Brussels. I work at ECIT Foundation. Basically, if I wanted to boil down my comment to a single sentence, it would be, "I don't see it as anything more than an illusion that one can renationalize politics in a world that's just increasingly transnational every day.

From climate change, to migration, to crime, every problem crosses borders. Therefore, any solution to such problems must cross borders too. Anything besides that is an illusion. What really infuriated me was the part of the discussion which spoke about the need to be renationalize solidarities, to reinvent solidarity between people who are nationals of one state, which immediately as its afterthought has not been solidary towards the people who will belong in the same community, but are not nationals of that state.

This idea of national solidarity hasn't really brought Europe to a very glorious place in 1930s, I think. What I want to say that in a city of Glasgow, where Adam Smith used to live, I would just like to remind David that in his Theory of Moral Sentiments, he had this idea of an impartial spectator.

The impartial spectator is, for example, a foreigner who comes to your community and has ideas which are not clouded by your national discourses and can contribute to the social contract of this community that he now inhabits by fresh ideas from





outside. I think that renationalising democracy in terms of excluding people from the outside as inferior would also make the social contract inferior because you're not allowing outside voices to come in. In that sense, let me just finish by saying that it's 45% of people and increasing mobile citizens on average, not 3% and I think that it--

David: [inaudible 01:01:22]

Peter: Yes, so and many more under the radar on the one hand and I think that I think it's a bit of a contradiction to bemoan the dire consequences of the freedom of mobility on the one hand, and then belittle it by saying it's only 3% of the population so yes, thank you.

David: You were putting words into my mouth. I did not talk about excluding Europeans or people you would no doubt describe as the other. I'm not talking about that at all. I'm talking about national solidarity did not exist on a significant scale in European societies in the 1930s. It was largely created by the postwar social democratic settlement and that was a great moment in European history.

It happened in most countries at roughly the same time, there was a much higher level of equality in our countries than it existed before. There was a much higher level of sharing as I said earlier, across classes, regions, generations, I said nothing about excluding people from other countries. Obviously, people who are living and working in a country they are part of the national community. You're trying to imply that I'm some xenophobe when I'm absolutely not. What else did you say?

Yes, go and tell what you said to Nicola Sturgeon, see what she thinks about it. There are lots of places in Europe that still think that national democracy is a good thing. Some places that don't actually have a nation-state and would like one. We haven't yet found anything better. We have low levels of supranational institutional logic, we have even lower levels of supranational democracy.

I'm not saying we should abandon that what we do have, this is always going to be a very thin and small thing relative to national democracies because we have institutions, we understand people speaking languages, we understand we have a shared history.

Now, our societies are becoming more diverse and this society is a pretty open one actually and I'm glad about that. There are also limits to openness and we are seeing and experiencing some push-back against the degree of openness that we've experienced in the last 20 or 30 years and I don't think that is on the whole malevolently or maliciously motivated, I think it's perfectly decently motivated. I think I talk about decent populism I think it's a real thing.

If you look at the attitude survey evidence you will find most people who would have voted for Brexit would also go along with what I call the great liberalisation on race, on gender, on sexuality in recent years. The idea that we have this rump of deplorables that we have to shrink our democracies because we're so frightened of our fellow citizens, and we have to take large chunks of decision making out of the democratic process because we can't trust our fellow citizens is what I hear behind a lot of these arguments.





Stephen: Niccolò, can I just ask for your take on the decent populism aspect and how you see that fitting into--

Niccolò: I don't contest that people may for example, who voted for Brexit or for Donald Trump, for that matter for decent reasons that so when David talks about decent motivations, I think that there can be plenty of decent motivations. For me the issue is, what are the consequences of what people who voted for and other consequences decent? I think, in many cases, they're not decent consequences and so for it to take one of the examples that was under exchange.

I think one of the consequences of trying to force through Brexit is to break up European families who have set up their lives in a context of free movement and may live in places like Glasgow but might not have citizenships which are compatible and will allow them all to stay together.

There will be damage caused by these kinds of decisions which were not taken into account. That's one could say only a tiny number of people. The glaring example of damage that could be done is in Northern Ireland. People may have decent reasons for voting for Brexit, but a consequence of some of the Brexit versions they might support maybe extremely damaging. It's not about the motivations. It's about thinking through the consequences the policies.

Robert Rogerson: Robert Rogerson from University of Strathclyde, perhaps I can pick up on that last point and open up to more general discussion between the two of you to see if there's any common ground. Forgive me the rest of you, I'm coming from a Scottish perspective we've had two referenda in five years. As you can hear, the conversations could be cast in terms of what you are both doing or thinking about positionality of us as individuals in a state or nations.

I come from a different perspective, I guess like many of us, we've been working as a citizen education to try and address our democratic deficit, encourage people to get involved and be participating in the decision making at whatever scale we operate. I wonder if we're at a new challenge of democratic deficit, which is how do we deal with instruments and outcomes of employing those instruments when the decision is not what you want? Because that's the position I live in here in Scotland.

Five years ago, we voted not to be independent and for five years, politicians have talked about being independent. When do we come to a decision about it? How do people have a say in that? We want to explore Brexit, open it up again, we voted against Brexit, we may be not in favor of it, we have some against it, we may not understand it, I take accept all of that. We deploy an instrument of referendum that we would recognize as being a good tool to open up citizen participation. At what point do either of you see the ability to have a democratic say that is absolute?

Stephen: Well, David, do you want to tackle that?

David: You mean final? I mean surely never, surely democracy is constantly moving and reshaping itself. Having said that, you have a referendum on something. I think you need to wait at the very least the standard period between elections before





having another one. I think having a second referendum now would be I'd like to remain, but I think we should leave the European Union.

We voted narrowly to leave, and I think we should do it. We then confirm that in the 2017 election 85% of people voted for parties that not only wanted to leave, but actually wanted to leave in quite hard way leaving the single market and the Customs Union. I think there might be a case for having a second reference, if there had been a clear and significant shift every opinion poll was saying 60%, 65% of the population, we're now in favor of staying or even more determined to leave before then that might be a case.

I think even then you can't-- It built into the rules of democracy that you can accept the fact that you're in the minority and that you accept the decision of the majority. Now, you might say, "Referendum should always have super majorities or whatever built into them." I think we are living with the consequences of the difficulty of combining the direct democracy of referendums with parliamentary democracy. There was never an absolute moment. Well, there is, of course, and we have much more in continental Europe than we do here is things as it were taken out of the Democratic contest and placed in constitutions and made inviolable minority rights, et cetera.

We've not really had that tradition. We've had the tradition of parliamentary sovereignty and the flexibility of parliamentary sovereignty, which we may be, we were feeling rather smug a few years ago in the context of what was happening in Spain. Spain was hoist by its written constitution into this clash with the Catalans. Whereas in the case of London and Scotland, a couple of years earlier, Scottish nationalism had risen as a force.

London was able to say, "Well, we regret the fact that you want a referendum, but we're not going to stand in the way. Have a referendum." The result was narrowly to remain in the Union. We had that flexibility that the Spanish, the more kind of Napoleonic code continental European tradition didn't give to Spain. I think there is value in that flexibility. Perhaps, we've seen in the last few weeks, it may be too flexible. We do also now have with the Human Rights Act and other things, we have some constraints on absolute parliamentary sovereignty.

Stephen: Niccolò, do you want to jump in on that?

Niccolò: Yes. I think that the reason that the minority protections are in constitution is not to subscribe them from democracy, is to prevent democracy turning into a tyranny of the majority. These things are important to get right. I think that's part of the consequences of the referendum about Brexit being so carelessly set up is that the possibilities of the tyranny of a very small majority are present.

More generally I would say that if we continue to have referendums on issues around national identity, I don't think we will get down to those. I think frankly, these are outdated questions. I think one will remain simply in a purgatory. In a certain sense, my whole intellectual and active effort is to try to move beyond these questions of national identity because I think they are a form of purgatory. Now, referendums can be disrespected in other ways.





Referendums have public water in Italy, for example, was a huge referendum, which was not implemented and that has serious democratic implications. There can be ways in which the referendums are ignored, which are not to do with the fact that the question is an impossible question. Governments can ignore referendum. We need to be clear. I think in the case of Scottish independence and also to my mind, in the case of Brexit, they are in a certain sense questions, which will only lead to purgatory.

Boris Jokic: Hello, my name is Boris Jokic, I'm a member of the Advisory Board of NECE, coming from Croatia. Coming from a region which was infatuated with the idea of nation state. In many cases, the region of Yugoslavia, behind many issues behind UK but with the issues with regard to the formation of nations and dissolution from the Federation to nations, we're a bit ahead. It's surprising to me to be infatuated with the idea, romantic idea of nation again.

My question is, although I respect to this mix from David, I really do, the mix between the liberalism and Social Democrats in social democratic areas in various elements but I'm quite interested in how do you, in 2019 define nation? In other words, is Bosnia and Herzegovina a nation for you or Croatia? Is Catalonia, is that a nation? Is Basque country a nation?

Then the question is, is Northern Ireland a nation? If it is a nation, how does all of the elements that you spoke about, for example, the national solidarity, how does that reflect in the society nowadays? Because I have a feeling that Niccolò just said now, if we go back to the national ideas, these are not national ideas from the 19th century or the 20th century even, these are the new nation-states now appearing.

In this fragmentation, where does thinking about the future of one space, call it a nation or not, how does that go in the future? Just a small add on to that. I know it's not your field but what are the relations of debt thinking then on the citizenship education? In other words, is there a UK citizenship education? Do we have a Northern Ireland citizenship education? Do we have a citizenship education of Basque country with regards to the other parts of Spain?

Niccolò: Thank you. David, do you want to--

David: That's a big question. I think we shouldn't forget a very important thing, which is Europe is the exception here. What I'm talking about in terms of nation-states and the normality of nation-states is still the reality pretty well everywhere around the world. Britain leaving the European Union is going to become, not some weird anomaly. It's going to become like Canada or Australia or the United States, smaller version of. It's not as if we're jumping into the unknown. It's Europe, which has for good benign historical reasons, created a odd hybrid between the nation-state and something more post-national.

Good people can disagree about whether that is working well or not. About whether we should stay part of it or leave it. There are trade-offs involved. There are economic and other cultural indeed benefits from being very closely aligned to each other. There are also losses in terms of the decisions that you make about how your society runs. You can't any longer control who becomes a fellow citizen. You can't





control things like state aid or public procurement policy or what your GM policy might be. Different countries have different attitudes to risk, say. The Germans tend to be very cautious about things.

Other countries are less cautious and everything gets homogenized in the European Union. Now, that's a price that some people think is worth paying and that some people think isn't. Reasonable people can disagree about these things and do disagree. We spent three bloody years disagreeing about it. What is a nation-state? Many books have been written about this. Pragmatically, a nation-state is whoever is a citizen of it or even to some extent, whoever is living within its boundaries. I think in the case of the Balkans, what's the problem that national identities were suppressed in the Yugoslavia era?

That then they burst out violently after the collapse of Yugoslavia. Was it a problem of too much nationalism or too little nationalism in a way that then created too much? I think in most cases, Britain is five nations in one state. If you could count Northern Ireland as two nations in one rather small space or is it one? Who knows? Wales has a strong national identity. Scotland has a strong national identity.

They both have I think one of the problems recently is that although I don't by the line that Brexit is this expression of rampant English nationalism, I think perhaps one of the causes of it is that we've not had the institutional reinvention of England where Scotland and Wales and Northern Ireland and perhaps most of all, have been reinvented as countries and have new institutions over recent years.

That's been a good thing for those places and it's created a really interesting of national discourse in those places. England has not had that experience. I think what a nation-state is usually pretty self-evident. When it isn't, we're usually in trouble. I think like I say in terms of-- There are obviously a whole set of issues of who belongs? Who is actually a member of the nation-state or not? I think certainly in this country, we have a pretty open attitude to that.

We're very free and easy with dual citizenship, say. Lots and lots of countries and not at all free and easy with dual citizenship. Nobody in Britain ever seems to be very worried about the fact lots of people have multiple citizenships. I think that's fine too. If you live in a place for most of the time and most of us even the mobile ones of us live in a certain place most of the time, that is where our democratic allegiance naturally lies.

I think that is the point that Theresa May was trying to make in her rather clumsy statement that provided Niccolò with the book title. [chuckles] I think what she said was perfectly legitimate. She said it in a typically cack-handed way. What she should have said is, "It's perfectly good and proper to be internationally-minded to have strong international connections. I've got a cousin who lives in Malta," I don't know.

She should have said something like that, but it's also really important that the people running our society have a strong contract as it were, with the citizens of that country, whether it's the people who run our companies, or politics. If their primary connections and identities are elsewhere, that does create a problem for National Democratic accountability.





Stephen: Niccolò, can I ask a sack of the question of citizenship education and that's because I think there's the--

Niccolò: Yes. I will just note that under David's definitions of the nation, the two that he's sketched, people living in the country or the national citizens of the country.

Stephen: That's a nation state rather than the nation, as he said.

Niccolò: Neither of those definitions would work for the referendum that took place because neither of those groups of people were fully able to participate. I think it's something to consider. When it comes to citizenship education, I think that we have a common history as Europeans that ought to be taught in schools. I think that we spoken enough about Brexit but a very important cause of Brexit is total lack of understanding of European history and together with that comes with a proper understanding of European colonialism, which is also linked up with the ways in which the European Union was created.

I think that history is central to the taught. I think that it can be and should be different in each country in the sense that it should relate the national histories to wider a European story. I think that their comparisons that can be made and contrasts open up people's minds to diversity and open up people's minds to different geopolitical positions.

I think that's politics for the foreseeable future will be increasingly geopolitical as something that in the Balkans you know a lot about because it's been an epicenter of geopolitics for a long time, but all of our countries in a globalized world and given our decline in military prowess are subject to geopolitical factors. I see comparative history in schools as a very important way of people starting to understand what geopolitics is about?

Stephen: Okay. Can I take the last quick question, anyone else that wants-- Okay, you're tied to our lives. Exactly. Okay. I'm going to ask you both for reasons to be optimistic where we know we've had lots of disagreements, lots of interesting opinions. Can you give us something to be optimistic about Nicola when you're looking at this into the future? Are you still convinced that democracy is in crisis?

Niccolò: Yes, but I about I see the capacity of civil society and citizens to learn and mobilize and perhaps most notably at the peripheries as its escape, no one's noticed that. The people who, in a certain sense have most at stake, for example, in the future of the European Union, whether they be in Ukraine or North Macedonia, or now increasingly in the UK, perhaps have really started to articulate why that's so important without having to hide their deep criticisms of it. I see hope in the politicization of the European Union coming from the peripheries.

Stephen: Okay. David, can you give us something you're optimistic about.

David: Yes. The one thing I do worry about are all of these little prefixes, talking about transformative democracy. Why don't we just talk about democracy? Or the rather chilling tyranny of small majorities? [laughs] I think it's the case, I read





somewhere that the 58%:42% decision to leave the European Union and Brexit was within the bounds--

Stephen: 52%:48%.

David: Sorry?

Stephen: 52%:48%.

David: Sorry, 52%:48% was roughly within the bounds of I think all but about three of the presidential elections since the Second World War. [chuckles] Maybe the tyranny of a small majority but that's how the game works. I think rather dismayingly a lot of people have not really accepted that. I think that they're not being good democrats. Having said that, my reason for optimism is that I think a lot of people have been-- A lot of good liberally minded people have been admonished, have felt that they haven't been listening to a voice that is now found expression and I think it is and it is changing our politics, it is changing politics for the better.

We have higher participation now in elections but it's energized people and some bit at the margin is a bit ugly, but we have the internet is also completely transforming our politics, it's broken the locks on the public square. Social media was still in the foothills, we're still learning how to use in a civilized way and we got a long way to go on that, obviously, but this is giving voice to people.

Broadly speaking, there are some bad people out there, but I don't believe in putting people in boxes as one leading conservative said to me the other day about the Boris Johnson government, "No, David, you don't understand. They're really bad people." Well, no, actually, they're not it. That's a childish way of thinking about politics I think. We are more open, I think we now have a much broader plethora of voices expressed in our democracy, and I think that must be a good thing.

Stephen: Okay. I asked you at the start, whether you felt that where you sat on the question that we're discussing, I'm going to ask you again, do you think that democracy is working? Good. We still have some optimists out there smarter who think democracies in crisis.

David: Anybody?

Stephen: No, and who thinks it's both, somewhere in between.

Audience: [background conversation]

Stephen: [chuckles] Thank you very much, everyone. Thank you very much to it. [laughs] Why not? Thank you very much to both of you. It's been an interesting discussion. Thank you for your time. Thank you to all of you.

[applause]

[END OF RECORDING]

