

Ian L.: Well hello again. As we mentioned this morning, Congressional calendars being what they are, we had a couple of last minute changes, but we're delighted that our, or at least many of our Congressional members will be with us this afternoon. But it did allow us to create a new session, and I think it's a session that you'll all be very keen to hear because in a sense everybody is a stakeholder in American politics.

Ian L.: We're really, really proud and pleased to be able to have wonderful people with us for a discussion on decoding American politics toward 2020 and after. We're especially delighted that to moderate this session we'll have with us Margaret Carlson. Margaret is a former GMF board member. She's a columnist at The Daily Beast. She was 20 years at Time Magazine, and I think was the first woman columnist at Time Magazine, and a fantastic person to lead this conversation. So, Margaret, please do join us. Thank you.

Margaret C.: Tomorrow I'm doing Will America Be Back?, but today we're going to do Pure 2020. We have the debates to look at as fresh material. But let me introduce our panelists. Jane Harmon. All are old friends let me say, and I don't want to put emphasis on old. Jane Harmon left Congress for a better job after nine terms. She's at The Woodrow Wilson Center, and she is one of the most bipartisan, centrist people in the country, as we all are. We all like to think we are.

Margaret C.: Charlie, he's now a CNN contributor. He went straight as well, leaving Congress, and with DLA Piper as an attorney. He won 13 elections, and he's unindicted.

Charlie D.: Undefeated.

Margaret C.: Undefeated.

Charlie D.: And unindicted.

Margaret C.: But more importantly in the atmosphere we're in, unindicted. Okay, John was ambassador to Germany in his last incarnation. He's now at The Capital Group. He was in the Clinton White House, and he started in politics in California in 1984. I did not meet you in 1984.

John E.: You were too young.

Margaret C.: He's older than I am, but we've known each other for a long, long time, and in the best occupation in the world, which I think is to be in the scrum and to be in politics. So let me give you just the shortest version of the debates, which are just a blip on the screen, but look important right now because it's the view we have of where we are.

Margaret C.: Last night we did have a breakout person, which is what we're looking for in this, and I think it was Senator Kamala Harris from California. She had a back and forth with Joe Biden, and she has the best line I may have ever heard at a

debate, other than maybe, "Where's the beef?," which we all remember. Which ... In a conversation about busing, she said, "I was that little girl who benefited from busing," which Joe Biden was not, to be generous, wholehearted about.

Margaret C.: The night before, Elizabeth Warren was the person to I think dominate the stage, but of course she was the first-tier person out there. She had kind of the luck of the draw; although, maybe if you don't engage, you don't win as much. She really had the stage to herself, and she is this year's kind of Hillary Clinton in terms of she has a 10-point plan for just about everything.

Margaret C.: There's a recent poll, however, that asked Democrats what they were looking for in a candidate, and a bold new plan got 25 percent. So we have to be careful about your plans. John, tell me from your perspective, you're such a veteran, and I know where we are now is not where we'll be, but tell us where we are and where we're going.

John E.: Well, I mean I think you, well first of all, Margaret, thank you very much and thanks for having me, and to GMF as well for what I think has been an extraordinary conference. I think three things thinking about, I'll be like Mike Morrell and just say everything in threes, about the debates.

John E.: Number one, as you suggested, the question is did anybody break out or sort of earn the opportunity to have a serious look, and unquestionably on the first night Julian Castro I think did earn that. I think you're going to see maybe not a big bump in the polls-

Margaret C.: But it was on section 1325 of the Immigration Act.

John E.: Yeah. Well okay, that was a little detailed.

Margaret C.: And Beto O'Rourke was already dead.

John E.: Yeah, right.

Margaret C.: Okay.

John E.: Just watch. He's going to get a little bit of a bump on that. Secondly, you've got sort of the battle of the titans between Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders as to who's going to occupy or dominate that left lane, and Elizabeth Warren has been eating the food off Bernie Sanders' plate. Just keep your eye on that New Hampshire primary because one of those will come out of that, if not terminally wounded, in the ICU. Because that's going to be a big one.

John E.: Then the third is, as you suggested, last night Kamala Harris. When you wake up in the morning, and you go onto Politico, and you see the headline, watch the five minutes where Kamala Harris owned Joe Biden. That's a pretty significant

win for somebody in the debate. Now the downside of that is, in the next debate, guess what? She's going to have a bullseye on her back.

Margaret C.: Right. Depending on how ... If the herd is thinned in the meantime, maybe there won't be two separate debates. Maybe there won't be 20 and counting up there. Then we'll see people matched up. The disappointment this time is that you didn't have the matchups. We'll see what happens.

John E.: Yeah, that's right.

Margaret C.: So, Charlie, where do you think we are? Or did Trump win both nights?

Charlie D.: Well, I guess my quick answer is that somebody's going to break through. I'm not sure who it is, if it's going to be Warren. I happen to think Kamala Harris checks a lot of boxes for the Democrats and could break through. And at the end of the day though, my own view is that Joe Biden is probably the best position to win a general election but maybe not what Democratic primary voters are looking for, many of whom want to seek a next generation, a fresh face.

Charlie D.: So I mean this is the problem that the Democrats are facing. And how many times will Joe Biden have to reverse himself or apologize in order to placate the rabid elements of the base? At the same time, that will diminish him. And I like to do Scranton tests all the time because Joe Biden was born and raised in Scranton, Pennsylvania, which is about 65 miles from my home. A lot of people talk about Scranton, but they've never been there. I've actually been there.

Charlie D.: Certain things that I can tell you, like the flip flop on the Hyde Amendment, regardless of where you stand on that issue, doesn't do well in Scranton. So issues like that that would hurt him in the general election. So bottom line is if the Democrats nominate somebody, I'll say like a Bernie Sanders or a Elizabeth Warren, that I think helps Trump, but it also could bring rise to a serious third party or independent movement because in the center of the country, center right to center left will feel unspoken to, and something or someone will fill that void.

Margaret C.: Are those 40,000 votes in Pennsylvania flippable?

Charlie D.: Those 44,000 votes in Pennsylvania, yes, are flippable. And I always say that I didn't predict it, I thought that Hillary was going to win Pennsylvania, but Hillary won by a large enough margin within the Philadelphia region to carry the state. What happened though, it's not that Trump won Pennsylvania; it's that Hillary lost Pennsylvania. Her vote collapsed outside of the Philadelphia region and major urban centers. It just simply collapsed. Trump and Romney performed at about the same level, but Trump won and Romney did not. Obama significantly over-performed Hillary Clinton in Pennsylvania.

Margaret C.: So Charlie is my ex-officio congressman because I'm from Pennsylvania. I just wrote a piece in The Atlantic that touched on Pennsylvania values. Which one of those candidates speaks, other than Joe Biden, to Scranton values?

Charlie D.: I think that many respects, Pete Buttigieg I think has a nice tone and a nice temperament. I think he speaks well. Maybe some of the candidates who maybe will never get traction. Maybe a Tim Ryan. I mean he speaks with a Pittsburgh accent. He's from Youngstown, Ohio.

Margaret C.: Ohio, yeah.

Charlie D.: I mean he can relate to a lot of those folks. I even think a John Delaney. But some of those candidates are just probably not ever going to get off the ground; although Delaney's going to have money to stay for awhile, he can self-fund.

Margaret C.: Self funding, yeah.

Charlie D.: So I mean some folks like that. I actually think Kamala Harris could speak very well to the Philadelphia region in particular. I think she'll be an attractive candidate there, so those are the ones. But I think Warren and Sanders would have some challenges in Pennsylvania.

Margaret C.: Jane, your take on where we are.

Jane Harmon: Several things. First of all, in political time, it's 100 years between now and November 2020.

Margaret C.: Pretend it's not.

Jane Harmon: Well, but it is.

Margaret C.: Just for us.

Jane Harmon: But, Margaret, it is. This is reality TV. This is not really politics yet. That's my view. I mean having run as many times as I did and I won all of my House races, nine, and all the primaries, eight. I lost only one primary for governor in the middle of all this craziness. But I'm saying it's hard, and things don't gel until the last minute, and they won't here either.

Jane Harmon: The field will thin, but it ain't over until it's over, that's one point. Secondly, a voice that I miss in this field is Mitch Landrieu. He's right there, and his conversation about race ...

Margaret C.: Yes, the world's mayor.

Jane Harmon: ... Is one that we're not having.

Margaret C.: Other than Bloomberg, the world's best mayor.

Jane Harmon: I just want to say that we're not having the way he says it, so that's two. And I don't know yet, I mean does experience matter at all anymore to anybody? The thing about Joe Biden that I find so appealing is that he has the long record, that he's been in the big fights. I was a Senate aid when he was first elected to the Senate, and the wife and child had just died and the guy was traumatized properly for awhile, and found his feet and really was an important voice all these years, and is a thoroughly decent guy. So I head a nonpartisan think tank. I can't endorse anybody, but I think experience and life experience matter, and he's got both. He's a voice we shouldn't discount just because he's been there awhile. Charlie's right, he shouldn't run away from his record. That's a mistake.

Jane Harmon: Last comment about people like Charlie, I mean we ... Imagine this, there is friendship and bipartisanship in the House, and we were/are friends and collaborators in the House. The problem is in today's politics that the business model's broken, and what happens, and this is relevant to how this is all going to unfold, is that the most shrill voices in each party get a disproportionate share of votes in primaries, and so the parties are moving this way, the center is shrinking. Here we are, the dinosaur centrists. The center is shrinking, and that is not a recipe, not one for governing Congress or the country effectively. But number two, for getting the majority in a presidential. I mean I think in the end, who will win president is somebody who can get the center, the disenfranchised center — not the angry old white guys — the disenfranchised center to join them, and that's why it's a huge mistake it seems to me for Biden if he's going to do this, to run away from his record.

John E.: Can I jump into that for a sec?

Margaret C.: So, John, let me just-

John E.: Okay.

Margaret C.: Pick up on Biden because I want to get to Biden in the high 30s out of the box. Everyone predicted Biden would peak the day he announced, the GAF Machine Tool, all of that. But he has not, despite many gaffs if you ask me. But that gets us to this electability question, which seems to me a really hard guess; like who's electable? But the tom-toms are beating, it's Biden, it's Biden, B for Biden. Let's try not to cannibalize our own. Is that what accounts for Biden's lead at the moment?

John E.: No question about it. I just wanted to make one point on this question of the Scranton thing and running away from your record. The single most important quality that people are looking for in a president is authenticity. I think [crosstalk 00:14:03]

Margaret C.: Right. And after you fake that, everything else is easy.

John E.: No, but I think it's ... I'll tell you what, this is what people like about Donald Trump. This is a man who has never had an unexpressed thought. I mean what you see is what you get, and I think lack of authenticity or perceived lack of authenticity hurt Hillary and it hurt Al Gore, so I just want to kind of reiterate that point.

Margaret C.: So just tell me who's authentic. Elizabeth Warren looks authentic.

John E.: Bernie Sanders is the most authentic, but it's not enough to get the ... I think Kamala Harris last night.

Margaret C.: Some people shouldn't be that authentic, and that's Bernie Sanders.

John E.: That's a good point. I think Elizabeth Warren is authentic, except the Pocahontas thing doesn't help on that front.

Margaret C.: You don't think she put that away. That's ancient history.

John E.: Trust me, when Trump starts live tweeting these things, that'll come back.

Margaret C.: He'll resurrect it. Yes.

John E.: But I think Kamala Harris showed some authenticity, telling personal stories and relating them not in a lecture-y way, but in a sort of emotional way. I think that was somewhat appealing. But to your point about Biden and the 30 percent and all that, two things to keep in mind. Number one, no question, what the Democrats are looking for in this election is electability. It's not an ideological primary. It may feel that way because of this, the battle you have going on on the hard left, and then centrist lane that Biden and Klobuchar and Buttigieg and some others are trying —Ryan— others are trying to occupy.

John E.: But it's not really an ideological battle, it's more a battle of, "I am presenting myself as I'm the most electable. Why am I the most electable? Because I'm going to get those votes in Scranton." Or the other argument is, "I'm the most electable because I'll inspire the Democratic base the way Donald Trump inspired the Republican base. The problem with that argument is the Democratic base lives in places like California and New York that the Democrats already win. But I think that's why, for sure 100 percent why Joe Biden continues to do well. I've always contended his bigger problem is winning the primaries than it is winning the general election.

Charlie D.: I agree.

Margaret C.: Good point. Now, the map could change. All of the stories are about Wisconsin, Michigan, and Pennsylvania, not Hillary didn't pay enough attention, the people there are disenchanted by Democrats. Michigan, 10,000 votes, that's a few

Pilates classes and women's studies at the University of Michigan. So you can get Michigan back, it seems to me. But the map could move, and how do Democrats figure that part of it out?

Charlie D.: Well let me just say this. I neglected to say that Senator Amy Klobuchar could probably do well in Pennsylvania too. I think she checks a few boxes there. But how does the map change-

Margaret C.: You know, this is such your problem. We have-

Charlie D.: There's too many candidates. I can't keep them all straight, there's so many.

Margaret C.: There are way too many, and at the end I want you guys to thin the herd, okay?

Charlie D.: Well, I mean but you're right. President Trump has very little margin for error in this election. 44,000 votes in Pennsylvania, was it 10,000 in Michigan, and maybe a little more than that in Wisconsin.

Margaret C.: It was 60 all together, so you do the math.

Charlie D.: It was 60,000. Very, very, low, so you do the math. So he has no margin for error, and candidly being a Republican and a guy who frankly never got along with President Trump. He told me I was going to destroy the Republican Party, it was going to be my fault, but I thought he was doing a pretty good job all by himself, but nevertheless, of destroying the party. But the point is, no margin for error. So there are many Republicans who want to vote for somebody else, and I think it really comes down to this. If the Democrats do nominate somebody hard left, there will be a lot of Republicans say, "I want to vote for somebody else, but if it's Elizabeth Warren, I can't do that. I can't do Bernie, but ..."

Margaret C.: That's the boldened plan problem, which is they're all leftists [crosstalk 00:17:54]

Charlie D.: But the map I don't think is going to shift too much. I can't see any states — maybe New Hampshire — I can't see any states that Trump could win in 2020 that he did not win in 2016. Now he's talking about Minnesota, and New Mexico, and Nevada, and I think New Hampshire. I think it's a stretch, so I don't see him expanding the playing field at all, and the Democrats have opportunities to win back some states that they lost. But again, no margin for error. By the way, in Pennsylvania in 2018 the suburbs were a Republican killing zone, and I'm not just talking for Congress. I mean look at the state legislative seats, and I've talked to every one of those folks who lost, why they lost: Donald Trump. In one key county outside of Philadelphia, Chester County, over 20 percent of the Republicans were voting against Republican candidates down ballot because of President Trump, and they lost.

Jane Harmon: So let me go back to something you mentioned that's sort of floating around here, and that is would there be a third party? There have been third parties in our past, and most of them are spoilers for one party or the other. Ralph Nader, for example, was a spoiler in his race. So there may be, I mean Bloomberg, your friend Bloomberg was looking at running as a Democrat.

Margaret C.: I wish I was a better friend. He's a multi-billionaire.

Jane Harmon: Yeah, well let's not go there. Anyway, was looking at first he was a Republican, then he was an independent, and then he was a Democrat, but if he somehow ...

Jane Harmon: There's nowhere else to go except [crosstalk 00:19:39] Yeah, flipped back and was in a third party, or maybe Howard Schultz, or maybe someone else who can self-fund, that's my point, is in this thing, that helps Trump. That's at least the way I would measure it. But the right play is to pitch to the center. I mean I know it's hard to win a primary that way, but I think a lot more people are going to turn out this year because the stakes are so high, and I think younger voters who never turn out, single digits sometimes in primaries, and does anyone know what the turnout was in the AOC-Joe Crowley primary?

Charlie D.: Next to nothing, tiny.

Jane Harmon: Yeah, 5 percent. Hello, 5 percent. So you think about that, and then you think ... I think she's a [inaudible 00:20:23] She'll have an out sized influence in Congress. She knows how to handle her position extremely well, and she expresses a far left view. But my point is that if more people turn out in primaries, and if somebody is pitching to the center, that makes a huge difference, and the could deter a third party challenge, which will inevitably help Trump. And for those of you who want to help Trump, that's where you go.

Margaret C.: What didn't come up in the debates, and I thought it might, was nobody was going after Trump. So they were only going after each other. And Medicare for all is one of those headlines that's not good for Democrats, because as bad as healthcare is, many people like their health care. So Jane's point, which is how does the Medicare for all candidate, does she ever come back to the middle, or if she were to get the nomination, is that all Trump needs to win again?

John E.: No, but I do agree with you that this sort of people falling all over one another to be acceptable to the left primary portion of the electorate could create problems in the general election. We saw that with Kamala Harris where initially she was saying, "Let's get rid of all health insurance." Then she sort of walked that back a little bit. She hasn't completely walked it back, but walked it back a little bit. So obviously ...

Margaret C.: She did enough that she has room to clean it up.



John E.: Yes, exactly. I think you're going to begin to see a little bit of that, but hey, first things first. They got to win the primary, and traditionally. And by the way, in Republican politics too, which is why Trump's win was so unusual in 2016, because he never did try to tack back to the center. But traditionally obviously you get the nomination and then you try to build it back, and I think you can see in some of these candidates, with the exception of certainly Warren and Bernie. But even there, Warren's saying, "Hey, I'm a capitalist. He's a socialist." Trump will call them all-

Margaret C.: But Trump's going to call them all socialists.

John E.: He'll call them all socialists.

Margaret C.: No matter who it is. Biden will be a socialist.

John E.: I would just ... You're probably right. I would just caution people, I think Trump has a better margin in the re-elect than 2016. This isn't going to be 2016 60,000 votes. The guy is the sitting president of the United States. He's got the biggest bully pulpit in the world, and if you look at polls today and it shows certain Democrats doing better than Donald Trump, guess what? All of Trump's negatives are already baked in. There's not a thing you can possibly say about the guy-

Margaret C.: And shockingly over the last week we found out that rape is baked into the cake, and evangelicals more or less admit it; if they get their judges, everything is fine with them.

John E.: No question about it, so I think-

Margaret C.: Listen, I'm a substitute teacher if you want to come in, just [crosstalk 00:23:19]

Jane Harmon: But what if there's a recession? And there just was a panel discussing this, a worldwide recession, and Trump's big brag about the tax cuts and-

John E.: That's a huge problem for us.

Jane Harmon: The rest of it.

John E.: Danger.

Margaret C.: And by the way, he's asking for trouble with the trade war and other things. I mean he could kill his own economy-

John E.: But he's pretty sensitive to those. Remember, I mean he's not adverse to doing an immediate pivot-

Margaret C.: He won't.

John E.: And taking something-

Margaret C.: He sends Larry Kudlow out on CNBC every time the market drops, and Larry says, "No problem with the Chinese."

Charlie D.: Margaret, I think you look at Trump, he's got a high floor and a low ceiling. On his worst day he's at 35 percent. On his best day he's at 45 percent. Now if the economy dips, I think that all comes down a little. I'm not sure how much, but it will come down. So keep an eye on that. But Trump, in some respects he's a little predictable. On the one hand, he's very ... He makes untruthful statements a dozen times a day, but he's also very honest.

Jane Harmon: He blurts things out.

Charlie D.: It comes out of his Twitter feed. [crosstalk 00:24:25] There's an honesty that even though there's all these lies.

Margaret C.: Well as Jane says, it's not exactly honesty. It's like-

Jane Harmon: I wouldn't call that honesty.

Jane Harmon: Unscripted. I mean he says anything that comes to his mind on day one and then a different thing on day two. [crosstalk 00:24:40] It's not honesty.

Charlie D.: But the economy, he made a threat a few weeks ago to impose tariffs on Mexico, emergency tariffs on Mexico because of the migrants running into the country, or coming to the country. I knew for a fact there was no way he was ever going to impose a tariff on Mexico for one reason: Texas. His numbers in Texas are bad, and no state is more integrated with the Mexican economy in this country than Texas as far as I can tell. It would have a devastating effect on the Texas economy, so of course he was never going to impose a tariff willy nilly on the Mexicans. I mean so sometimes you can see where this guy's going. He blusters, he makes threats, he makes noise, then they end up negotiating something, say on NAFTA. It's an incremental change at best. And then he'll declare victory — it's the greatest deal of all time, and I predict it's never going to be ratified by Congress before the election.

John E.: Oh that's interesting.

Charlie D.: I don't think it's going to happen.

Jane Harmon: I think it's going to be a very big lift because Democrats, many, especially on the left, are not pro-trade. Those of us in the center were, are, and Republicans too

now. So the pro-trade nucleus is small, and how to get that through when he's behaving the way he is escapes me.

John E.: Doesn't that hurt him? Because that was one of his big deliverables.

Charlie D.: Well, but there's no ... What Democrats want to give President Trump a victory on that? And they can blame, that's the politics, but on the policy side they'll say, "Oh it's all a giveaway to big pharma."

Jane Harmon: But also NAFTA was not, we didn't pull out of NAFTA. It's still in place. Remember that. He was going to do that, and he didn't do it, so the economy, the economic relationship is in tact even if it's kind of an ancient format to trade.

Charlie D.: Sure, and you should remember too, when we passed what was called fast track authority, trade promotion authority with President Obama, we got 32 Democrats in the House to vote for it, and that was pulling teeth. Now if President Trump renegotiates NAFTA, a deal that most of the House Democrats never liked, and now Trump renegotiates it, and of course that makes it the greatest deal of all time, who's going to ... No Democrat's going to vote for that. I mean on what planet would that happen? It's just not going to happen, and so I don't see it-

John E.: Just to see the arc on that, we had 106 Democrats for NAFTA in 1993.

Charlie D.: Yeah.

John E.: When we got that, so it's just kind of going down.

Charlie D.: What Democrats is President Trump going to bring over that President Obama couldn't bring over? I mean-

Margaret C.: So, before we go to questions, let's do war and peace. How does that, Trump bomb Iran? Oh, not going to do it, war kills people. Don't like it. So we don't know, but there's still battleships. We have troops there. John Bolton and Mike Pompeo are whispering in this ear. So we were-

John E.: Right, and Tucker Carlson whispering in the other ear.

Margaret C.: In the other one, yes. No relation, no relation. Tucker Carlson. Some people say we were 10 minutes away, and Trump pulls it back. So Iran is out there, and he hates our allies and loves our enemies, so how is that going to play?

John E.: Well I think the Iran thing, I think you hit the nail on the head when you talked about the movement of troops in there and military assets. Donald Trump has no interest in engaging in a war in Iran. He wanted to get out of ... Or he thought

the Iraq War was a bad deal. He wanted to get out of Syria. He wanted to get out of Afghanistan. What he did in Syria is one reason why General Mattis resigned as Secretary of Defense. But he does the bluster and then pulls back, but the danger, and by the way, I think the Iranians don't want a war right now. They'd just as soon try to wait the guy out and see if he's out of there in a year and a half.

John E.: Every Democrat has said they'll go back into the JCPOA, and so they're hoping for that. The danger is when you start putting military assets and truths into close proximity with one another, somebody can do something stupid or there's just a simple mistake, and now Trump has gone on record of saying if they shoot any — he's done a red line — if they shoot anything down, manned or unmanned, there're going to be major military consequences. That is a concern.

Margaret C.: See, I was grateful no one died, but now he said it's not going to take that.

Jane Harmon: Well, but a couple things. First of all, a really good current senator just walked in the room, Roy Blunt's over there.

Margaret C.: Hey, Senator and neighbor, hi.

Jane Harmon: The total absence of process is terrifying. He doesn't listen to anybody. He says, "I listen to myself. I'm the guy who makes all the decisions." The State Department is hollowed out. That doesn't mean there aren't a few good people there, but most of the ambassadors haven't been confirmed, lots of the positions are empty or just acting. There's an acting, well he's going to be nominated now, Secretary of Defense who many people think is very good. I haven't met him. I'm on the Defense Policy Board. The last guy left a week ago, and so there's trouble there. He doesn't have either a deputy's committee that functions or any committee that functions, sit room meetings that mean anything. And that's where the danger of miscalculation is absolutely huge. You can't wing foreign policy. You can't tweet your way to a sensible foreign policy. You have to have a process that supports the least bad decision. These are all hard issues. Nobody has perfect answers, but the process would help. And you have to have a congress that's paying attention too and not ducking it.

Margaret C.: I picture Trump getting out the super glue and trying to put that Iran deal back together in some way, to have some framework for where we are.

Charlie D.: Yeah look, I was in Congress at the time that the Iran deal was being put together. I happened to vote against it. I had problems with it. That said, I thought-

Margaret C.: Is it better than nothing?

Charlie D.: Yes, at this point. I said it was better.

Margaret C.: That's a low bar, but-

Charlie D.: I said, look, my feeling at the time when he withdrew from the agreement, I thought without a plan there's no point in withdrawing, and I'd rather just fight one nuclear battle at a time; you know, North Korea. We don't need to reopen the Iran issue, but fight Iran on those issues outside of the agreement. I just want to say one thing about Senator Blunt. He gave me some of my best political advice ever. He said, "Charlie," he was the Whip in the House. He said, "Never say what you will never do because you may end up doing it at some point." And I did. And I did. I thought-

Margaret C.: That's advice for all of us.

Charlie D.: I would never vote-

Margaret C.: Thanks, Roy.

Charlie D.: I would never vote to rescue the financial system until I did. But that was very good advice. The bottom line is on Iran, my concern with the President on foreign policy is he's threatened to pull out of NAFTA, threatened to pull out of NATO, pull out of Paris, pulled out of the Iran agreement. I'm probably forgetting one. Oh, TPP.

John E.: TPP.

Charlie D.: My point is-

Margaret C.: Anything Obama touched, he pulled out of.

Charlie D.: These are American commitments, whether we supported them or not, and I think in order for him to enter into any future agreements, it has to be durable and sustainable. And if the next president thinks they can simply withdraw from an agreement because of the predecessor enacting it, well then I think we're in trouble.

John E.: For sure.

Charlie D.: It hurts us in the eyes of the world, so that was the whole issue with me. I supported some of these agreements and some I didn't. But at the same time, we should stay in them. And I wish he'd get back in TPP by the way.

Jane Harmon: And think how Kim Jong Un sees this. Trump wants an agreement with him on denuclearization, maybe, could be slow rolled now. But he watched him trash the last one on a containment deal at Iran's nuclear capabilities. So why would he think he'd stay in this one?

Margaret C.: Which reminds me, the degree to which Trump's foreign policy is based on who flatters me is also frightening. Forget process. There's something that goes on with the beautiful letters. If we have time, I want to get bac because you know, you've dealt with Trump and know him best and may have advice for our Democrats here. But let me take a few questions, quick questions.

Ian L.: Got one back there.

Margaret C.: Yeah.

Maia Espinoza: Hi, my name is Maia Espinoza. I'm from Washington state and a Republican. So we've talked a lot about 2020, but I haven't heard the beyond part yet. We've seen the Democratic Party kind of shift to the left and reshape their image in response to Trump, and I want to know how the right is going to reshape after Trump.

Margaret C.: Well, if there's an after Trump right away in 2020, does the Republican Party ... Actually that's a question for the Senator, but does the Republican Party become the party it was?

John E.: Yeah, I think it's important to understand that Donald Trump was not the umpteenth Republican president of the United States. He was actually the first third party president of the United States. I mean because much of what was Republican Party, you know, I don't want to say orthodoxies so much, but much and particularly as it related to foreign policy, trade, et cetera, he just kind of pushed aside. On the other hand, a successor president or the successor party cannot ignore the extraordinary loyalty that he's been able to build with certain elements-

Margaret C.: Or fear.

John E.: Well, but however he built it, with certain elements of the Republican base. So my guess is you're going to see, like with all things, you're going to see a synthesis of both things. By the way, on this point about breaking agreements, this is going to be a problem for a future Democratic or Republican president.

Margaret C.: For sure.

John E.: Because we're hurting our credibility globally.

Jane Harmon: Let me say, I hope the Republican Party has a strong future. I think we do better with a competitive system in a democracy. We probably have five Democratic parties at the moment and only a Trump party and no Republican party. But there are a few things that Trump has done in the Republican mainstream or on the Republican bucket list, like get a lot of conservative judges confirmed, like do a tax cut that helps Republicans and especially wealthy Republicans, and like rally ... Well actually, this loses the suburbs, but conservative Republicans have

been anti-choice, and so Trump is right there. So he hasn't abandoned everything. I wouldn't call him a third party candidate, but he was a protest candidate. To make Charlie's point, a lot of people didn't vote for him; they voted against Hillary.

Margaret C.: So Democrats need to not have a candidate that people want to vote against. [crosstalk 00:35:18] This is a baseline, yes.

Charlie D.: The Republican Party, as a Republican here on the stage here, I would just say this. Look, before Donald Trump, in order to be a good Republican there were certain litmus tests. You had to be doctrinaire and conform ideologically. I never did, so I was pro-choice on abortion, pro-LGBT rights, and ...

Jane Harmon: That's why I love him.

Charlie D.: So I would be called a rhino Republican, name only, or squish, whatever. I didn't care. It didn't bother me, but so here comes-

Margaret C.: You've been the man in the room.

Charlie D.: Yeah.

Margaret C.: How did Trump treat you?

Charlie D.: Not well. So but the point I'm making is before Trump, there were those litmus tests. So we thought you nominate somebody like a Ted Cruz or somebody who's very doctrinaire. Heaven forbid Ted Cruz ... But then here comes Donald Trump who was not doctrinaire, who was not ideologically conforming to much of anything, completely transactional pretty much. I mean that's what he was, and frankly that's where most Republican voters were. They were what I called 80 percent conservative, but some issues they were off the reservation. And the Republican primary voter didn't care because that's the way they were too. So he changed that. Now so what happens after he's gone? Well, does the Republican Party remain Trumpian, or does it go to another place? At this moment I don't know where it goes. But I don't know that it goes back to where it was, but I can't imagine it stays where it is.

John E.: Well particularly if he loses.

Charlie D.: Yeah, particularly if he loses.

Margaret C.: So we have a minute or two left. We need a lightning round here.

Charlie D.: Back there.

John E.: Questions here.

Margaret C.: Ah, here.

Speaker 7: Okay, sorry. Thank you. Okay, my name is [inaudible 00:37:05] I'm in the Tennessee State Senate. So my question to you all is if we ... Well I'm a Democrat, so if Democrats don't get it together and Donald Trump is reelected, what does that look like for the transatlantic relationship?

John E.: Not good.

Margaret C.: No.

John E.: As someone who spent, and Jane can speak to this too, but as someone who spends a third of his time overseas talking to folks, there's a real sense of anxiety, of directionally where we're headed, and I think they would love a President Bush, they would love a President Romney, but they're very worried people, our counterparts, our allies are very worried about another four years of Donald Trump and a Donald Trump unleashed where he doesn't have to worry about reelection. That would be my take on it.

Margaret C.: Do we have a 25 second question?

Charlie D.: Steve is back there.

Margaret C.: Steve Clemons.

Jane Harmon: Quiet and shy little Steve Clemons.

Steve Clemons: Steve Clemons with The Hill. That was a great discussion. You know, when I look at Donald Trump and the question that hasn't really been discussed out there is that there are a lot of military families, people in the Midwest and others, the notion that the United States fought the Cold War and China won may sound like a joke, but for them it's very real. They feel like internationalism, conferences like this being engaged in the world has produced a raw deal for them. So the rise of pugnacious nationalism in the United States is also about economic aspirations. I remember McKinsey writing a report saying offshoring is good for America-

Margaret C.: Steve. Steve, we're out of time.

Steve Clemons: I know, so the question is how do you deal? I don't see a single Democrat talking about pugnacious nationalism-

John E.: Bernie Sanders [crosstalk 00:38:45]

Steve Clemons: Which is sad, but I mean the point is why isn't there a person out there that is reclarifying the benefits of international engagement to people?



Jane Harmon: Because they're involved in reality TV, all of them, and that's what we seem to value these days, and foreign policy doesn't play well in anybody's polls. That is a tragedy. The good news is that Roy Blunt and a few members of Congress get out to these conferences. I know we have no time, but Congress is hopefully going to reassert itself. Was there a vote yesterday or today on funding Iran? Did that happen?

Roy Blunt: It happened early this morning. But it wouldn't...

Jane Harmon: It didn't pass. Okay, but my point is Congress needs to be in this. Congress needs to decide, and the people's voices reflected in Congress, whether we're going to get into another war, and needs to decide the cost of it in lives and treasure, and that's another voice that's missing.

Margaret C.: One sentence, one sentence.

Charlie D.: Okay, pugnacious nationalism. Protectionism, isolationism, and nativism are not traits of great countries, I hope that Democrats don't go down that road; although, they're a little bit more of a protectionist party than the Republicans had been. But these elements run in both political parties, so I hope they don't go down that road.

Margaret C.: Right. John?

John E.: I think speaking-

Margaret C.: You can go broad. You can wrap up.

John E.: Speaking of the people who are running, with the exception of Bernie Sanders, who I think would be more America withdrawing, there is definitely the desire to reassert our relationships with our allies and work with our allies in addressing things like China, where by the way there's tremendous bipartisan support in terms of getting tough on China. So I think directionally that may be where we head.

Margaret C.: Okay. So you did not get Senator Johnson or Congressman Brown, but you got us, and I hope that was compensation. I would love to see you all at breakfast tomorrow where we do talk the world. Thanks for coming.

John E.: Thank you.

Margaret C.: Jane, John, Charlie. [crosstalk 00:40:45]