

## **Starting Over: The Center-Right After Trump** **A Niskanen Center Conference on December 11, 2018**

*KEYNOTE: ANNE APPLEBAUM*

**Brink Lindsey:** Okay, we'll move forward with the program now with today's keynote address. I'm delighted and proud to introduce Anne Applebaum, our keynote speaker. Anne is a Pulitzer Prize-winning historian and journalist, and the author of numerous books, most notably *Gulag: A History*, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe, 1944-1956*, and *Red Famine: Stalin's War on Ukraine*. Anne is also a columnist for the *Washington Post* and a Professor in Practice at the London School of Economics. I think we are focused on our political predicament here in the United States, but it is not a one-off, it is not a unique phenomenon. What's going on here is of a piece with what's going on in many other countries around the world. And the struggles that liberal democracy is going through now are not unique. It has gone through struggles in the past. So to bring our current moment into a broader perspective, I can't think of anybody who can do a better job than Anne, given her unique breadth and depth of perspective on these matters — and a transatlantic perspective, certainly, because she lives a transatlantic life. Anne is a citizen of the United States and of Poland...

**Anne Applebaum:** And Britain.

**Brink Lindsey:** And a citizen of Britain too. So a triple club member. That's good. We're all looking for Plan Bs. So you've got a couple. [laughter] Her Polish citizenship comes by virtue of her marriage to Radek Sikorski, who's been Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of National Defense, among other high posts in the Polish government. She lives in London a good chunk of the year, during her work at LSE, so clearly she has a first-hand European perspective on what's going on. And I might add that the recent piece she did for *The Atlantic*, "Polarization in Poland: A Warning from Europe," is one of the most gripping and maybe most depressing pieces I've read in the large and growing literature about what has gone wrong with liberal democracy. Here in the United States we are engaged in this endless tussle: "Is it economic anxiety or is it racial resentment? Is it the bad economy or is it immigration?" And my answer is, "Yes, it's both and more." But in Poland, there is no refugee crisis, the economy has been hot, and yet they're going through the same kinds of struggles that we are. And so perhaps the question isn't what causes democracies to fall apart, but what causes them to hold together in the first place. That may be the more fundamental question.

**Brink Lindsey:** In addition to this geographic breadth of experience, Anne brings a historical depth of experience as an historian of Europe's descent into unfreedom during the 20th century with her chronicling of totalitarian communism. Anne is immersed in the dark side of mass politics and how things can go badly wrong, and so brings this historical perspective to our current struggles with unfreedom. So please welcome Anne Applebaum. [applause]

**Anne Applebaum:** Oh, thank you Brink. It's a little distressing to be introduced as the modern Cassandra, bringer of bad news from around the world. I'm afraid some of the news isn't good, but I might try and cheer you up at the end. I'm really delighted to be here. It's interesting... I know lots of people in this room, and some of you I've known at different phases. I've known Brink, for example, since he was at the Cato Institute. I know some of you through libertarian and conservative and other phases. And it's really nice to see everybody once again focused on

the fundamental problems facing us. I know that we're here to talk about mostly American politics and the Republican Party and the right, and I'll get to that. But I will spend first a few minutes thinking about something related but broader, which is the decline and maybe the collapse, if we're not careful, of the institutions and alliances that we have got used to calling "the West."

Fears about the health of the West are not new. Back in the 1950s when these institutions were still very shaky, I'm sure lots of people feared that liberal democracy in Western Europe might not last, that the NATO alliance might not ever take off, and that a wave of communist revolutions would drain the whole continent into the Soviet bloc. Maybe in the 1970s, with Vietnam, many people once again feared the West would not survive. But I have to tell you, in my adult life, I really can't remember a moment as dramatic as this. Right now, we really are close, as close as we've ever been, to the end of the Western alliance and probably the liberal democratic world order as we know it. And yes, I do think that these two things are related, as I'm going to explain. Look at what's happening here: Regardless of how you interpret the midterms, they haven't changed one really important thing, which is that for the first time since the Second World War, we have in the White House a president who is an isolationist and a self-described nationalist, who therefore represents a strain of thinking in American politics that hasn't had a serious advocate since the 1940s.

Dislike of America's alliances, dislike of other democracies, is actually one of the very few opinions that Donald Trump has held consistently for many, many years. "America has no vital interest in Europe," he wrote two decades ago in 2000. "Their conflicts are not worth American lives. Pulling back from Europe would save this country millions of dollars annually." At his first NATO summit, he refused to reaffirm Article 5. At his second NATO summit, he picked an argument over European defense spending. He's rude. He goes out of his way to be rude to our allies in Britain and Germany and more.

But look also at what's happening on the other side of the ocean. As Brink said, I write a lot about Poland and Hungary. I live in Poland part of the time. These are two very successful states where governments have set about undermining their own democratic institutions, the same ones that were put in place after 1989, thus jeopardizing their membership of European and transatlantic institutions.

But I do not think this is some kind of East European problem. In Italy and Austria, political parties that openly prefer Russia to the United States are now part of ruling coalitions. In the last French elections, an overtly anti-American, anti-European, and anti-NATO presidential candidate got 40 percent of the vote, which was an all-time high. She didn't win. She was beaten by a charismatic centrist. But he is now very unpopular, and maybe next time she or perhaps her far-left equivalent will win.

Nor are these changes superficial, representing normal shifts in alliances or political tactics. We know these alliances are based on shared values and in particular on a shared idea about liberal democracy. For decades, we've assumed that this kind of democracy is a one-way street, that wealthy democracies never return to autocracy, that they don't go backwards.

But is this still the case? Many of you may know the work of Yascha Mounk, a political scientist at Harvard, who recently looked through the figures and found that views about democracy in Western countries are much worse than he expected, across the board. The number of people who believe that it is essential to live in a democracy has now slipped in almost every Western

country, and democracy skepticism is rising rapidly among young people. So, just to take a random example of a country we sometimes look up to as moderate and normal, among Swedes born in the 1930s and '40s, more than 80 percent believe that democracy is essential. Among Swedes born in 1980, however, that number falls to 60 percent. For Americans, the number is much more dramatic, with only 30 percent of people born in 1980 — that's people who are now in their late 30s — believing that democracy is essential. And indeed a quarter of young Americans polled in 2011 stated that democracy is a bad or a very bad way to run a country. Similarly poor numbers can be seen in countries as varied as Britain, the Netherlands, and Australia. So it's a pattern across the democratic world. Just so that you know, the numbers aren't that much more positive about a larger concept of the West across the alliance.

If you ask kind of general polling questions about NATO, you'll still get a positive response. But when the questions focus specifically, for example, on what NATO should do on the use of military force to come to the aid of allies, which is the whole point of NATO, support drops really dramatically. So only 40 percent of Germans and 45 percent of the British say they would want their armies to come to the aid of a NATO ally in case of a Russian attack. When asked specifically if the U.S. Army should fight back against a Russian invasion of the Baltic states, only 54 percent of Americans say the U.S. should offer support. So there's still a small majority, but that also means that four in 10 Americans, presumably including Republicans as well as Democrats, would oppose the enforcement of Article 5 in the clearest-cut case. And so we can hardly be surprised that the president of the United States reflects a view that's held by so many voters. What's truly extraordinary, though, is the way that these doubts and anxieties are growing so fast in so many countries that have so many different histories and different economic situations and different politics. And that, I think, means that we have to reach rather deeper for explanations

What Brink just said about “Is it the recession?” or “Is it just about racism?” — this is really too simple. I mean, again, he mentioned Poland. He's right. Poland has not had a recession since 1980. Inequality is shrinking. Every social class across the board has experienced growth. It's too simple to speak about racism or immigration. There isn't any immigration there. But also, it's not a good explanation as a source for discontent in countries as varied as Britain (which actually has a long tradition of absorbing immigrants rather well) or Italy (which doesn't) or Hungary (which has no immigrants at all). Nevertheless, I do think that across the West, there are some broader links. And so, from my weird perspective as an American who lives part of the time in Eastern Europe and part in the West and has three passports and a confusing identity, let me try to identify a few things that all Western democracies have in common.

For one, in this country and particularly in this city, I don't think that all of us understand the degree to which we are paying the price for a series of perceived American failures, together with European absences, going back across several U.S. administrations. Some of them are military; we know them. But the Iraq War is now remembered as a disaster — not just a mistake, but a disaster — even in nations like Poland and Britain that supported it. It's seen as the cause of the current crisis in the Middle East, rightly or wrongly. Let's not talk about that, actually, because it's too complicated, but that is the perception. But also the Afghan conflict, which was supported across Europe and had NATO support, is also perceived to have failed.

More recently the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the Russian intervention in Syria, neither of which received much of a discernible U.S. response, also created the feeling that the Western alliance is somehow no longer in control either of Europe's eastern borders or of itself. In other

words, in the most important security crisis of the past decade, the EU and NATO have played only peripheral roles and the U.S. has seemed like a complete bystander.

Even more important were the financial crises of 2008 and 2009. Bill Kristol spoke about how those crises may have caused some populist discontent. No, it's much worse than that. Those crises really ended forever, or at least for the foreseeable future, the assumption that Western democracies have a superior understanding of economics and markets. In the United States, of course, the financial crisis dealt a blow to the belief that the American economic system is fair. To many people — again, fairly or unfairly — it seemed like bankers were rescued while ordinary people weren't. In Europe, the European Union and the IMF, also emanations of the Western world order, were blamed for insisting on austerity and recovery programs. In some cases it worked and in some places it didn't. In Italy and Greece, the blame for an entire generation's lost jobs is now laid squarely on Berlin, Brussels, and Washington. Some people are beginning to whisper, "The Chinese, with their high growth levels — maybe they know something that we don't."

More to the point, the combination of all these things is quite powerful. Iraq's shadow, Russia's military interventions, the meltdown in Syria, plus the global financial crisis, this means that politicians and businessmen and ordinary people around the world from Shanghai to Rio don't believe any more that Western-style capitalism is necessarily the most fair and effective, or that Western leadership necessarily creates a more peaceful world. And perhaps inevitably that means that Western-led democracy and Western-led institutions no longer have the cachet inside Western countries, either, that they used to have.

I think technology is part of the shifting mood, too, in a deeper way than we usually think. We rarely think about it, but in fact we're living through an era of unprecedented change — technological, dramatic change — and of course it affects the way that we work and think. Remember, the iPhone was invented in 2007, which is 11 years ago, and now the entire developed world carries telephones (which are really mini-supercomputers) around in their pockets at all times. And I think we're all learning that it's not just that robots can eliminate factory jobs, or that driverless cars will throw millions of people who drive for a living out of work. Computer algorithms may eliminate doctors and lawyers, or at the very least will make those professions change dramatically. And as I know from having lived through the transition to capitalism in Eastern Europe in the 1990s, any sort of change, even change for the better or change for growth, creates enormous anxieties and fears as people are forced to shift jobs and rethink their careers. And yet our political systems seem to have no answer, no comfort, no suggestions.

On the contrary, by contrast with the rapidly changing economy, the institutions of democracy can seem very slow and cumbersome. Voting, campaigning, the formation of coalitions, slow compromises that you need to make democracy work — all of this seems unbelievably out of date in a world where everything else happens so fast. You know, you can press a button on your phone and lunch will appear in half an hour, and yet the Swedish election was in September and they still don't have a government. And of course, this problem is even worse at a multinational level. Institutions like the EU or NATO find it extremely hard to take fast decisions or to make big changes even when the problems are staring them in the face. You can walk around Brussels and you can say to people, "What are you going to do about Russian disinformation?" They all say, "Yes, it's a terrible problem, but it's very complicated to solve and we just don't have the tools to solve it." Ordinary people are afraid of the changes technology will bring and they are

also afraid, with good reason, that their political leaders are not able to cope with them. Our institutions and our customs just seem out of date.

I think globalization is part of the story too, although not in the simplistic way that many people imagine. I don't think the problem in Western democracies is that most people don't like foreigners or foreign trade. Again, thanks to globalization, they're experiencing a loss of control. They feel their societies, their political leaders, aren't really that powerful anymore — and they're right. Nowadays, a decision made by somebody in China can close a factory or a shop in Reston, Virginia, just like decisions made by somebody in Washington can mean the inhabitants of Shanghai pay an extra tax or tariff. Nor is there any clear way out of this situation or easy answers. It was frustration with international trade and the realities of it that led many in Britain to vote to leave the European Union. And since then, the British have learned that actually they're going to have less control over their trade relationship with Europe, their most important trading partner, not more. The real crisis in Britain is that Brexit looked like an easy solution, a way out of some of these problems, when actually it's just caused the most complicated constitutional crisis since 1688.

The impact of global trade on democracy is only part of the story. Globalization has also led to a much greater movement of people — and I say “movement of people,” not immigration. We heard something about immigration today. I don't want to repeat that. But in some parts of Europe, emigration is just as important a part of the story as immigration. Of course, everybody knows immigrants pouring over the borders in 2015 made everybody nervous. But for some, the emptying out of whole villages in rural Central Europe, or indeed rural France, is equally disturbing.

One of the great ironies of the past decade is that many of the most important beneficiaries of the revolutions of 1989 were the young people of Poland, Bulgaria, Slovakia and elsewhere who celebrated their nation's attainment of integration with Europe by leaving home and moving to Paris. And actually in this, they joined clever people in other parts of Europe and the U.S. who left the provinces and headed for cities. So ironically, meritocracy, upward mobility, and all those things that we built into our system because we thought they were good, have drained parts of the countryside — small towns and cities — of talent as well as of a kind of respect. And this is something happening in every Western country.

The argument that foreigners from abroad, whether from Syria or from Mexico, will take their places and work in the jobs that they don't want anymore, is not necessarily comforting to nations or populations that now have cause to fear for their own existence. The brilliant Bulgarian writer Ivan Krastev wrote recently, “Don't underestimate the anxiety that can be caused by people who ask the question, ‘In 100 years, will anybody read Bulgarian poetry?’ Maybe they won't.” In the U.S., this dynamic is slightly different, but the effect is similar. Cities grow in power and wealth and rural communities feel that their way of life is diminishing — and it is, they're right.

Alongside and maybe above this technological and demographic and economic change, we've also been living through a revolution in political information. We've all, including me, talked a lot about how disinformation works and how easy it is to spread it to manipulate public opinion. But there are other really, really important effects, too, to the change in the way in which people get and process political information.

I would say as a side note that at every moment in history when there's been a change in information technology, huge political changes have accompanied it. The most famous example is the invention of the printing press, which was spectacular and wonderful. People became literate and books moved around the world. But it also led to the Reformation and a challenge to the establishment of the time, which was the Catholic Church. Maybe some Protestants in the room think that was good, but it led to the most profound, bitter, and violent wars Europe had ever known until the 20th century, which were the religious wars that followed the Reformation. It was an incredibly bloody and traumatic period that followed this change of political conversation.

The other great example is the invention of radio at the beginning of the 20th century. The first two people to really understand radio and how to use it politically were Hitler and Stalin. Both of them used it to get power, and it wasn't until there was a response in the form of the BBC and Franklin Roosevelt that there was a kind of reaction to it. So this has always happened.

There are so many pieces of this subject, and I don't want to take up all afternoon talking about it. But we were talking a little bit earlier about the breakdown of civic institutions and civic organizations. There's a relationship, I think, between that and the ease with which people can now find new communities online and also in the way in which our traditional political parties are breaking down in every single democracy.

What was Christian democracy, which was the equivalent of the European center-right? It was a movement that was based on real civic institutions mostly connected to the church. What was social democracy? It was a movement based on real labor institutions, on trade unions. As those institutions decline, people find new identities and they create new relationships online and they create new political parties. And these now feel to them stronger than the old ones, which they're not connected to anymore because those civic roots don't exist. And you can again see this playing itself out in almost every country in Europe as people seek new online identities and change the way that politics is done.

Finally, it's not a small problem that the Internet has undermined the business model of traditional media. We don't spend enough time thinking about this. The old-fashioned news organizations, newspapers, broadcasters, they were all very flawed. I worked for a lot of them. Nevertheless, many of them had as their founding principle at least a theoretical commitment to objectivity, to fact-checking, and also to the general public interest. We know they served as a filter. They eliminated egregious conspiracy theories, but we've paid less attention to the fact that they also created the possibility of a national conversation and a single debate in every democracy.

In most democracies, I would now say, not just ours, there is now no common debate, let alone a common narrative. People don't have the same facts. One group thinks one set of things is true, another believes in something quite different. We all know this. We understand this now. Social media contributes to the phenomenon. People seek out comforting narratives online. But this phenomenon not only creates hyperpartisanship, it also contributes to the distrust of normal politics, politicians, and political institutions, including courts and police and civil servants. These are invariably portrayed by both sides as having been captured by their opponents. It's really not an accident that when the Law and Justice Party in Poland and the Trump administration in the United States came to power, they both began making assaults on the civil

service and on professional diplomats. These are actually important, core parts of their political program.

At the same time, the loss of a national debate means that political conversation takes place on the Internet, where readers and writers feel distant from another, where they can be anonymous, where they take no responsibility for what they say. It's not an accident that Reddit and Facebook have become the perfect medium for irony and parody and cynical jokes, and it's also not an accident that a plethora of ironic and parodic and joke political candidates are suddenly winning elections in countries as disparate as Iceland and Poland and Serbia. Some of these are harmless, some of them aren't. But it's true that a generation of young people very often now treats elections as an opportunity to show their disdain for democracy by voting for people who don't even pretend to have political views. And that, I think, was a factor in our election as well.

This is a very long list and it's still only partial, but let me add one final idea that echoes something that Peter Peterson said in the last session. Back in 1940, when George Orwell was living through the consequences of a similar rise in anti-democratic movements in Europe and around the world, he wrote a review of *Mein Kampf*. It's famous review. He dissected it for his readers and he was appalled and saddened by what he read, but it also led him to another thought. He wondered whether the progressives and the liberals and the democrats of his generation had not underestimated the attraction of war and revolution and violent conflict. "Nearly all Western thought since the last war," he wrote, "has assumed tacitly that human beings desire nothing beyond ease, security, and the avoidance of pain." By contrast, Orwell wrote, "Hitler knows that human beings don't only want comfort, safety, short working-hours, hygiene, birth-control, and, in general, common sense; they also, at least intermittently, want struggle and self-sacrifice, not to mention drums, flags, and loyalty-parades."

I often wonder whether in our times, which are otherwise exciting, we have not simply grown bored with our democracy, or at least bored with our modern technocratic form of democracy in which arguments are made about economics and statistics, and we argue about how to expand the GDP, that that's the big project. We've ignored this human desire for crusades, for social change, for ideals and idealism. So many political campaigns are now won on negative slogans. But isn't that partly because there are so few positive ones on offer? I'm sure you can guess what I will conclude with — because yes, it seems to me that this rather gloomy analysis, or an expanded version of it, has to be at the beginning of any conversation about the center-right. Unless we can grasp this change, then I don't see how we come to terms with it. But I do believe that a positive political revolution is possible once we understand what these problems are. Some of the answers might come out of the new technology.

We've all seen how the Internet and social media enable new movements and parties, but there is no rule that says all those new parties have to be extremist. I've just recently met the leader of a new movement in Switzerland called Operation Libero, which is a group of online volunteer activists who've pooled their forces to fight back against the Swiss populist right. They've done it partly by changing the subject, partly by trying to get people not to talk about immigration but the rule of law, partly by creating coalitions, and partly by using humor and jokes. But there's really no reason why groups set up to pursue narrow causes, whether the environment or civil rights, can't band together into new political networks. In a number of places, that's happening. There's also no reason why these networks can't be international. And, in fact, it makes sense that since the source of insecurities are international, and some of the solutions are international,

that it's time to have a transatlantic debate about the regulation of the Internet — not censorship, but the regulation or the operation of digital platforms.

Maybe it's time to have this conversation be part of, and connect to, some of the similar conversations that are taking place in Britain and Poland and other European countries. Maybe it's time for a transatlantic debate about a joint response to Russian and other malign influence campaigns. Maybe it's time to reframe NATO, to think of it not just as a narrow military alliance but as a primary source of security for the West: cybersecurity, information security. Maybe it's time to be more revolutionary in our thinking about institutional reform. Does our voting system still make sense in the 21st century? Does our Constitution still work the same way it's supposed to? Is it okay that two senators represent the state of Wyoming with 500,000 people and two also represent California with 40 million?

Are there things Americans can learn from European democracies in the way they're run and vice versa? What about our capitalism? Do we really want 10 percent of the world's GDP to be in offshore tax havens, where it's not helping support schools and infrastructure, where it's being used to illicitly influence politics and policy all over the world? Anonymity is disastrous online, but it's also a real menace to the international financial system. Our governments are so weak in the West that we can't crack down on anonymous companies owned by other companies which buy up property in our cities and drive up prices.

Anyway, these are big tasks ahead of us to remake our institutions so they don't seem out of date, to find ways to make people feel safe and secure even if we're in a moment of really rapid and violent change, to give people in this country and around the world some reason to have faith in Western leadership again. But above all, I think if democrats are to defeat authoritarianism in the next few decades, we will have to discover once again how to inspire people, how to help them overcome fear, how to help them feel that the West is a joint project, and that we're doing something together to make something better. We've done it before and I'm sure we can do it again. Thank you.

[applause]

**Brink Lindsey:** Anne has time for a question or two, depending on how pithy they are.

**Q:** Thank you for a very good talk. You know, I read your *Atlantic* piece and one of the most poignant aspects of it was your description of your relationships in Poland, that you were a part of this band of classical liberals when the revolution happened, or shortly after that, and all of that fell by the wayside when the populist movement emerged...

**Anne Applebaum:** Half, not everybody.

**Q:** OK, many of the relationships fell by the wayside and former friends and intellectual comrades had sort of become enemies and stopped talking to each other. A similar experience happened to me in India. But setting that aside, earlier in the first half of this conference, we heard about how rebuilding those relationships around a common set of values and causes and also rebuilding civic society around certain bonds of trust is the answer to the current moment. But if that's the first thing that fell victim in your experience in Poland, how do you see rejuvenating that as sort of the answer to what we are going through right now?

**Anne Applebaum:** So how do I solve the problem of populism? [laughter] Look, some of the earlier panels came close to these very similar points. Several things are connected: the decline of civil society as we know it, the growth of the time that people spend online, the trends from

real-life relationships to virtual relationships, the change in affinity and loyalty to political parties and political feelings, the growth of new identities, the connections that people make with one another that wouldn't have happened before. These are all connected phenomenon. I think the really important point is that it's not going to go back. We're not going to go back to the previous system. The old party structure in Poland is not going to be the same. In Germany, it's probably not going to be the same. The world is not going to be divided between a center-right and a center-left as it was before. Also we aren't going to revive the old-fashioned media in the way that it existed before. Its power is gone. And so the question now is to face that head-on and say, "Okay, what does that mean?" We have these new phenomena.

**Anne Applebaum:** It happens that the Russians were the first to recognize the negative potential of social media and Facebook targeting. Maybe there's a positive way to use social media and Facebook targeting. Maybe some of the ideas that Jonathan was speaking about earlier, maybe there's a way to transfer lessons learned from Better Angels or one of those groups online. Maybe there are versions of that we could try and do. The point is that we need to begin experimenting with what works, how to connect people in positive ways instead of only negative ways, and how to use the moment so as not be caught on the back foot again. The speed of change is such that... I was on a panel in California a few months ago with Ted Koppel, who spoke very admirably and beautifully about the world as it used to be, and how we should have more civility, and how bad cable media is and cable TV is now and how it used to be better. The point is, though, that it isn't going to go back there. And so how do we use the institutions as they are now? How do we begin thinking about pushing them in a different direction?

**36:00 Brink:** Okay, time for one more quick one. Soren, in the back.

**Soren Dayton:** Taking the examples of France and Germany with the way their party structures seem to be changing to something completely... I won't say completely different, but certainly different although maybe not stable, looking at the streets of Paris right now. Do you see opportunities for analogous changes here? And one, could you describe for the room what you think is happening in the underlying party structures there? And, two, if there are useful analogies here, is there something stuck about our party system? Maybe we don't need to be a center-right exactly if Europe's an example.

**Anne Applebaum:** I don't have to tell everybody — and this is an audience that knows this — that we have a huge problem with the way our voting system works. It's first-past-the-post voting, as opposed to proportional representation which European countries find it easier. And by the way, Britain has the same problem we do. You know, the British political system is now completely out of whack. Both parties, the right and the left, are now really extreme versions of what they were a few years ago. And there's a huge part of the country... The center literally has no political representation, and that's again because it's very hard inside our voting systems to create new parties. I suppose it's very unrealistic to think about changing our voting system, but it's something that people should keep in the back of their heads. I know that there's an experiment in Maine with ranked-choice voting. This might be something that we could look at state by state to see if you therefore could get a more balanced range of candidates and so on.

**Anne Applebaum:** In both France and Germany, what is definitely happening is what I alluded to in my speech, which is the end of the two center-right, center-left blocs. I don't want to be too nostalgic about those blocs, particularly because in France the right was always a little weird. It was a bunch of different parties with different ideologies. But certainly the center-right and

certainly the center-left as we knew it, the kind of trade union-based center-left, is dying if not dead. And politics are moving towards a different construction in which instead of center-right versus center-left, it's kind of open versus closed. And so the election where that was most clearly clarified was in the French presidential election, where you had a candidate, Macron, who was in a certain sense also a populist and also created a new party from scratch. He destroyed the old right, and you had him running against the far-right in a kind of open versus closed argument. That's the most clear the argument has been anywhere.

**Anne Applebaum:** You had that also in Germany. A lot of attention gets paid to the growth of the AfD, which is the German far-right, but the growth of the German Greens is also extraordinary. And they just did really well in Bavaria, which is meant to be this super-stodgy Christian Democratic part of Germany, and actually the Greens do really well there now. And they are also kind of an open, pro-global as well as an environmentalist party. And so you have that party changing. The danger with open and closed is that at some point open will make a mistake and closed will win. And that's kind of what happened, actually, in Poland when we had that kind of polarization around those two sets of attitudes. When the pro-European party made some mistakes and the closed party won, they immediately began to try and change the political system to end democracy. So it's a dangerous model that I might want to be careful of.

**Anne Applebaum:** But we should also be thinking harder about whether our voting systems still serve us. Is this really the way? It may be a little utopian right now, but we should be thinking about whether our voting system and our Constitution work the way we want them to work now. I think that is an important road to go down.

**Brink Lindsey:** Thank you very much. [applause]