

CONVERSATIONS

WITH BILL KRISTOL

Conversations with Bill Kristol

Guest: Kristen Soltis Anderson, Author and Pollster

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I: What Makes Millennials Distinct (0:15 – 35:28)

KRISTOL: Welcome to *Conversations*. I'm Bill Kristol. I am very pleased to be joined today by Kristen Soltis Anderson, a pollster, a friend, a columnist for *The Washington Examiner*, author of an important book of, three or four years ago, *The Selfie Vote*, well known as a student of millennials, your generation.

ANDERSON: Yes, indeed.

KRISTOL: Willing to be tough on your generation, which you have been.

ANDERSON: Oh, absolutely. I feel like you're much more able to be critical if the call is coming from inside the house.

KRISTOL: Good. I can be generous and pretend that I think it's fine. No, I am very tough on the baby boomers; you should be tough on the millennials. And maybe, speaking of politics, we're talking here and it's mid-October. And just about a week ago you had an excellent tweet storm reacting to a *Washington Post* article saying, you know, Republicans shouldn't worry too much about the polling data showing they are weaker among younger voters, among millennials, than among older voters. It's typical, it happens all the time.

And you were pretty strong in sort of pushing back on that. So you have been a Republican, involved in Republican politics I think since you were in college, right, or shortly after college. And I have been involved in Republican politics a lot longer. I mean, how much trouble are we in?

ANDERSON: Well, right now there's a lot of folks I think in the Republican Party who feel very satisfied with the way things are. Controlling the White House, controlling both chambers of commerce? You know, the president's job approval may be at 40 percent, but those polls are all "fake news anyways."

There's a sense that – and especially if you look out in the states, Republicans controlling so many governors' mansions and state legislatures – that doomsayers, like me, like us, it seems like what universe are we living in? Republicans are doing fine; it's Democrats that are in disarray.

And the fact of the matter is that these trends that are troubling for the GOP, the problems that we're having with winning over younger voters, these are not problems that are going away or have just been negated by the fact of the 2016 election.

And so what worries me is that a lot of the work that needed to have been done over the last few years to begin trying to address these problems, now it's not even in fashion anymore to talk about it.

Because right now, the question in Republican politics is how do you keep the Trump coalition together? He put this new coalition together, it won the White House. Republicans hadn't done it for two elections before, so he figured something out, let's go with that.

And the problem is that long-term, the demographics of the Trump coalition do not work for a long-term Republican coalition.

KRISTOL: So you were alarmed about this before Trump and I think your argument would be that it's not just a Trump-specific problem, right?

ANDERSON: No, this began long before Trump came on the scene. As you mentioned, I wrote a book all about younger voters, *The Selfie Vote*. It came out about a week after Donald Trump announced that he was running for president. The word 'Trump' does not actually appear anywhere in the book because he was a non-issue, you know, when the manuscript got handed in.

The Republican Party's problems and opportunities with younger voters all pre-date the Trump era, but he has magnified and exacerbated these problems enormously. And in some ways I worry has just made it permanent, has made it that there's very little Republicans can do at this point in the short- to medium-term to turn things around.

KRISTOL: So what's the core of the problem? You hear so many people raise so many different issues, Republicans' views on so many things are out of synch allegedly with millennials. But if some Republican asked you, as many candidates have, what do I have, how do I connect with millennials, do I have to change my views on A, B or C, do I have to adjust my views on A, B – what is the A, B and C?

ANDERSON: Well, everyone wants the easy fix, right? For a while it was floating around that if every Republican changed their position on an issue like gay marriage, that suddenly the flood gates would open and young voters would all come streaming into the party.

And it's always about more than one issue. So you have seen the debate over something like gay marriage change an awful lot and it hasn't led to a lot more young voters swarming to the GOP. I mean, granted, the party's position hasn't changed dramatically, either.

It's never just about one issue. I think it's about what is the perception of the party's values? What does the party stand for? There's a great book, Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, all about the moral taste buds that conservatives and liberals use to sort out what's right and wrong in the world.

And for conservatives, we like things like tradition and loyalty, in addition to fairness and kindness. We're not monsters contrary to – okay, I speak for myself, I'm not a monster – we care about people, want to see a fair world, but also care about loyalty, etc., etc.

Whereas for the political left, it's very much about, "Are you hurting anyone? Is anyone being harmed and is this fair? Those are the two animating things. And for a lot of millennials, it looks much more like that kind of moral framework.

That's why this question of well, is it hurting anybody? If it's not hurting anybody, then go for it. That's why pot should be legal, let's have gay marriage, etc., etc., you can go down the list. But at the same

time, if it's viewed that a policy is hurting someone – cutting a government program, shrinking the size of government, things that Republicans love to talk about. And we sort of talk about it in this kind of rational – well, but this is the way to govern responsibly. If it sounds like something you're doing might hurt someone, that's a non-starter.

And I think that's a big part of why leaders who espouse the "we need to stop hurting the poor," this kind of compassionate message, even if it's not tethered to the actual facts of math and government budgeting and all of these sorts of things, that is a message that appeals greatly to this generation.

And Republicans are, I think, not on the right side of the "are you compassionate, do you care about people? Do you care about alleviating harm, addressing harm and fairness?" I think we're on the wrong sides of that in the minds of most millennials.

KRISTOL: That is so interesting. So let's talk about the millennials first. I was going to begin by talking more about Trump and Sanders and politics. We can get back to that, but actually I suppose to understand what millennials are and aren't doing politically, we should understand what they believe. And it sounds like what you're saying – so millennials are people born between what?

ANDERSON: '80s and '90s. It depends on who you ask. Sometimes it starts at '82, sometimes it starts at '80. I think the bigger question right now is where is the end point, do you cut it off somewhere in the late '90s, does it end right at the year 2000? It's a little bit fuzzy, but broadly I just say '80s and '90s.

KRISTOL: And there are more and more of them, more and more as a percentage of the electorate, right?

ANDERSON: Yes, that's right. In part because – well, immigration plays a small role, but millennials are, I believe, 85 million or so in the U.S., overtook the baby boomers about two years ago.

KRISTOL: Yeah, that was a blow, of course.

ANDERSON: Sorry.

KRISTOL: Because baby boomers have done so much damage, maybe it's better to have more of you. They are the largest demographic, generational group.

ANDERSON: And as I am often reminded by my colleagues in the Republican Party, that does not mean they are the biggest voting bloc. They are perhaps the largest *eligible* voting bloc. That doesn't mean that they are taking full advantage of their rights.

But nonetheless, that's why the corporate world, consumer brands, are just so focused on how you win this market because they have enormous – they are an enormous generation with an enormous amount of potential.

KRISTOL: And your argument, obviously, is there is something distinctive about the generation. I mean, some might say – oh, people always think that, but at the end of the day it's the long sweep of history, these generations don't really break down too much. But you do think there are some distinctive views, attitudes, experiences.

ANDERSON: I do. I think that the big thing that binds the millennial generation together – and again, with 85 million people, there's going to be a lot of diversity. It's very hard I often find to put single labels across all of these people.

But the one thing that I think binds them together is that we came of age in an era when the internet was just part of life. I remember the first time I ever used the internet was in the 6th grade. My middle school, you got access in our English class and it was just really exciting.

But for the most part, my entire adult life I have been able to use the internet. I have had access to an incredible wealth of information and the ability to connect with people all around the world. And me being at the oldest edge of the millennial generation, for folks younger than me, for some even the idea of having a smart phone that can get you information anywhere, any time. That's just a part of your life.

And I think that that, the generation that has come of age in the internet era, that is a thing that makes us different. Our expectations of speed, efficiency. Our expectations for our ability to connect with others, our ability to get information. I think these are all things that have led to us being genuinely distinct.

KRISTOL: And does your data in the focus groups that you have done and the polling that you've done and studied, I mean, how much difference are the cell phone millennials from the early millennials?

I know some millennials closer to your age and they say it's a different experience. I mean, going online at the end of the day when you start to do it, there's a more efficient way of researching things, I suppose and email is faster than letters or phone – you don't have to leave phone messages. But in some way, it doesn't really change experience, some people argue, as much as the incredible instantaneous access to everything and to everyone that cell phones really brought about. In that respect, the Apple revolution was the greatest as the 2007, I guess, combination of cell phone, texting, that kind of stuff.

Is that true, did that change things much or do you see more continuity across the --

ANDERSON: No, I think there is a gradient, if you will, across the generations. So being an old millennial, I remember being 16 and getting my driver's license and being able to drive a car and being so excited about that fact. And nowadays, when you look at data on how many 18 year olds graduate from high school with a driver's license and it is astonishing how many of them are just saying – no, I don't really need it, I don't really need a car. And part of it is they are less apt to hang out with their friends in person.

That's one of the things that the auto industry has been trying to figure out is how do we convince kids that they actually need cars and should go drive and hang out with each other? So that is one example of something –

KRISTOL: Plus, Uber must have changed things quite a bit.

ANDERSON: Sure, where older millennials and younger millennials, you have seen a big shift in attitude. So it is true that within the generation there is certainly a lot of diversity of behaviors and opinions.

KRISTOL: But basically?

ANDERSON: I think overall the thing that combined the oldest millennials to the youngest millennials, it is hard for us to remember a time, if at all possible to remember a time, before the internet existed and the pace of change in America had accelerated so rapidly on a whole variety of fronts.

KRISTOL: And I guess what else – historically, I do think, don't you think, the end of the Cold War, not living in a Cold War America is a big difference from those of us who did grow up in a Cold War America.

ANDERSON: Sure. And this is one of the other things that I think. When I'm looking at data about what millennials think about things like socialism that frustrates me the most is that being an older millennial, and being kind of a history nerd when I was in high school and college and really caring a lot about the Cold War, I came to the view that no, communism does not create a more just social order than what we have here in America.

But for many young people, like they don't remember the Berlin Wall falling, they don't remember the Soviet Union at all. For them, socialism isn't Russia, it's Denmark. And so as a result, I think you have a lot of younger millennials that do have a very different kind of historical perspective.

You've also got something like the older part of the millennial generation, we remember 9/11. And a couple of years ago I did a fellowship at a university and in talking to students there was astonished to realize these kids didn't remember September 11th. And so even, again, within the generation there are experiences that my piece of the millennial generation, that we have had, that the youngest, they have not had.

KRISTOL: I am sort of struck, 9/11 didn't have the effect, I at least thought it would have, in terms of as a lasting thing. I did think that – what did the Cold War teach people of my generation: that there are really bad people, bad nations – not bad nations, but nations controlled by bad people – who are aggressive and you've got to be tough in standing up to them.

That was certainly, someone like me, a Scoop Jackson Democrat and then a Reagan Republican, that's a lesson I took and obviously tens of millions of my fellow baby boomers, we were split on this. There were, of course, the McGovern Democrats. But there was a kind of just, I'd say hard headedness, tough mindedness that seemed to be vindicated by the way the Cold War worked out, as well as the belief that – that was the tough side of it. Then there was the kind of pro-freedom side, it was inspiring to see how much people cared about freedom all around the world and fought for it and relished it once they had the chance to.

So I sort of thought 9/11 would be your generation's experience of that, the hostility of those who attacked us, the need to be tough in fighting back. And of course, there was some of that, but it strikes me that that hasn't, am I right or wrong? That hasn't had the kind of effect that it might have, one might have thought.

ANDERSON: So there is a great public opinion research study that Harvard has been doing on young voters and they started it shortly before 9/11 and then sort of continued it, have continued it on up until present day. And one of the things they really are interested in studying around 9/11 was did younger people suddenly find a greater calling to civic duty, to serving in the military, to serving in government, to running for public office, to participating in American life in serving your country in that way?

And what they found was that for a lot of millennials, that there was this moment where suddenly they wanted to get a little more engaged, they wanted to give back. And we still see, actually, in the data that millennials are overwhelmingly a generation that wants to participate in things like volunteering, service is very important. Being for something positive, being a part of a cause that is bigger than yourself. And this idea that millennials are all sort of narcissistic and me, me, me, I think actually is not borne out in the data.

But I also think that the lasting impact of 9/11 has been that in the aftermath of 9/11, America's engagement with the world, and we're still at war in Afghanistan. We still, you know, I think, some of the data that troubles me the most, as someone who does think that America should have a very robust engagement with the world, is the data that shows millennials thinking, "Well, America is not really that great. We're not better than anybody else. We don't have a right to go tell anyone else how to run their country; we should be focused here at home, we've got problems here at home."

Again, which is kind of odd for a generation that we've come of age in the internet, we're so globally connected. And yet also yeah, "but let them do them and we'll do us and that's fine." And I think that's one of the enduring legacies of 9/11 and the actions that America took in response to 9/11 that has shaped millennials is this real humility about what America can actually achieve around the world.

KRISTOL: Maybe excessive humility. And I am struck by the trend against American exceptionalism. I suppose that would go with the kind of globalization, though, in a sense that one nation isn't that different from another or that much better than another.

ANDERSON: I think it's part of it. I mean, I think you can also point to what are kids being taught in the classrooms these days. It's very much in vogue to talk about what America has done wrong. And look, we should be teaching a complete view of history, but I think nowadays it is quite fashionable to talk about the ways in which America has failed and why, well, American values aren't really that great.

And this isn't the first time that America has had a moment where it is in vogue to talk about the ways in which America isn't perfect. But I think for a lot of young people, I mean, you see some of this kind of with this protest around the flag issue in the NFL, too, a little bit, right? That here you've got an issue, police brutality, which is one where, millennial views on things like race injustice are overwhelmingly in favor of things like criminal justice reform. A belief that the justice system is not fair to people from communities of color.

And I think for an older generation, the idea that these kids out on this football field are kneeling instead of pledging to the flag and singing along with the national anthem is just insane. But I think for a lot of younger people, it's like "well, we need to be fighting this injustice and I love my country, but America is not perfect." And so I think it's these sorts of generational divides that I think were exacerbated by the way young people view America's engagement with the world over the last 15 years.

KRISTOL: Speaking of race, I mean, that is a very interesting one. If you had asked me 15 years ago, I would say sure, your generation is going to have a very different attitude towards race than mine and certainly the one before mine. That is mostly good. I mean, you guys are much more color blind, basically and a much more diverse generation. And so race should be less of an issue. And there's more literal intermarriage too, so there are people of many races and the race issue will finally recede in America.

One thing I wouldn't have predicted, and we elected an African American president whom I didn't support and you didn't either, but nonetheless, I thought that was good in that respect. It was kind of okay, you know. And it has really been the opposite in the last couple of years. What is going on in race?

ANDERSON: Well, you used the word color blind. And actually in some ways, I think that millennials are very *not* color blind. They are very race conscious and very of the mind that instead of saying, "well race doesn't matter," it's the idea that race *does* matter and you need to talk about it and put it at the forefront.

And I think some conversation on college campuses has gone to an extreme where the idea that if you are of a certain race, if you're white, your opinion can't count on a certain issue. There are instances that are of these these inflammatory kind of moments.

But I think generally for millennials, the idea that oh, we can be color-blind, that was sort of the happy talk of their childhood. And now they look at something like Charlottesville and they say, well, these wounds haven't healed. America is not color-blind. And if we talk about America as being a color-blind place we are ignoring those realities.

And so, I think for this younger generation the way they're viewing race is different in part because we grew up being told we should all be color-blind. And now they're sort of reaching adulthood and realizing, well, things aren't quite as perfect as we were told when we were kids.

KRISTOL: And gender too. I mean, I don't think people would have predicted 15 years ago that those – we seem to be making progress as broadly defined by the country. A few reactionary conservatives, some of them friends of mine, we are all like oh, there's a flip side to this. But most people thought things were getting better, equal opportunity for women, and obviously minorities. But it is sort of somehow it seems to be paradoxical that people were more conscious of these things.

ANDERSON: I think so. But I think the debate around something like feminism is really interesting with millennials. So I did a survey of young women, women in their 20s and 30s, about two years ago and asked a series of two questions. The first was, “Do you believe in the political, economic, and social equality of women?”

And, I mean, overwhelmingly it was like 90 percent said yes to that. And then said, “Do you believe that the modern feminist movement represents your values?” And it fell below 50 percent. That there is this gap among young women who think that in some ways the feminist movement has been loaded down with all sorts of political baggage that they are uninterested in. That they want to be viewed as equals, that they want to be able to do whatever they want to do. And that doesn't have to mean saying that guys are bad, and it doesn't have to mean I pick a certain political party.

So in one sense we have these sort of “war on women,” you know, women's march issues still coming to the fore. But I do think that the way my generation views things is very different than our parents or grandparents.

And I think you can look at the Democratic primary for president and see some interesting evidence of this. I remember doing a focus group of voters in, I think it was New Hampshire, where we had women of a variety of different generations. And I said, be honest with me: how many of you are going to give Hillary Clinton bonus points? Because she's a woman and you'd like to see a woman president in your lifetime? And the older women in the room were like, “I don't love her, but I would like to see a female president.” And the younger women in the room, who I think by all accounts may have been more progressive, they're like, “I'm not going to give her any bonus points – I will see a female president in my lifetime. This is like this is a silly debate to me. So, no, she's not getting a bonus point.”

And then you saw in the Democratic primary this actually play out where Bernie Sanders wins enormous margins among millennial women. So I think the tone and tenor of the discussion around gender that previous generations have had is different than what you see with millennials.

KRISTOL: Now, that's interesting. But that, I would say, is in a way what I might have predicted, I mean what one might have predicted. Which is, there's been progress, the younger women don't feel the need to make a point so to speak. They expect there to be a woman president as there's a woman everything else, you know. And in that sort of sense there's less salience to the woman issue, right?

ANDERSON: Well, I don't necessarily know that there's less salience so much as that the fights look different. The fight is not that women feel trapped in their homes, and are not able to participate in the workforce. The fight now is, what do you do about someone like a Harvey Weinstein? Or you know, what do you do about those sorts of situations? So that it's not that there aren't – there isn't salience to the question of gender and what women can and can't do, and what barriers we face in the world. But I think it's just that those barriers look a lot different, and so we talk and think about them a lot differently.

KRISTOL: Yeah, that's interesting. The race, I would say, is a little way the opposite: of where just the core issue of race has come back in a way that is more like what it was a while ago.

ANDERSON: I wonder if it's that for gender issues there has been progress that is real and is measurable, and that is not doubted. Whereas on the race side, has there not really been progress but we just sort of felt okay about things because everything was -

KRISTOL: Well that's a very good point, and that may be so. It's a different set – I mean that's where I think the police brutality stuff really hits home in the sense that a lot of people who are 25 or 30 do realize, which is probably true, which is the experience of their fellow 25 or 30 year olds, who happen to be African Americans, is pretty different. Even if they're from a similar background, class background.

ANDERSON: Well and also bear in mind, on the gender side of things, okay, so you can talk about what does feminism think is an okay career or life path for women? And if you make the choice to stay home and raise your kids and choose to leave the workforce, is that something that feminism thinks is okay? And we're actually seeing more and more like millennial women who are trying to do this, "have it all" kind of lifestyle. That they want to participate in the workforce even if it's just part time, but they want to spend a lot of time with their kids. And family is actually very important to this generation. Is that at odds with this sort of older model of feminism that says like no, you can't – staying at home, you're failing your gender if you do that? I think for millennial women they're tired of movements telling them how they have to behave.

KRISTOL: That's interesting. What other distinctive things? The environment, I think that's an obvious -

ANDERSON: It is, and when it comes to that generation that is after the millennials, which doesn't really have a name yet. MTV did a study, they tried to call them the founders and I don't think that name stuck. And probably for a good reason.

KRISTOL: What are they founding?

ANDERSON: I think the idea was that they're going to be the ones that will be – I think in part it's that you've got founders of internet companies and things. This term of being a founder isn't – I think people generally rejected this attempt by MTV to make – so you have Gen-Z, post-millennial, and we haven't settled on a term yet. But -

KRISTOL: So these are people who are now just beginning – that the oldest cohort of whom are just beginning college.

ANDERSON: Yes. These are your middle schoolers and high schoolers today. That for them, there was a study done asking teenagers about their political views and found that teenagers who identify as Republican, actually hold pretty hardline views on immigration, etc., etc. And we can talk about there are a whole variety of reasons possibly for that.

But the one issued where there was almost no difference, based on your party affiliation, was climate change. That Republican teenagers and Democratic teenagers held the same sorts of views on climate change. That it's happening, we should do something about it; why are we even debating this? And so, on environmental issues, I think it goes back to that harm question. That the moral dimension, right? The idea that there is harm that is being caused and why are we not doing something to address that harm, is just very at odds with where a lot of young people are.

Now again in the same way that young women have in some ways turned away from this feminist label, 'environmentalist' is a label that millennials have walked away from. They are the generation least likely to identify themselves as environmentalists, despite having in some ways the greenest political views.

So I think for many of them, if I go out to lunch after this and I get a bottle of water, I'm going to recycle that bottle. And it's not like a political act when I do it because recycling has just been a thing that's been around my whole lifetime. And I think a lot of the environmental debates of the past, millennials don't want them to be political, don't understand why they would be political.

KRISTOL: What about some of the more character issues of millennials, some of the caricatures? How much does the data bear them out? They're sensitive, they're snowflakes, they're easily offended.

ANDERSON: So, I think there are some caricatures of millennials that I push back against pretty strongly. And again, being inside the generation I'm more than willing to criticize us when we deserve it. But I'm also willing to defend us when we deserve defense.

KRISTOL: No, no, you should.

ANDERSON: And I did a study for the College Republicans in 2013, where before we asked any political questions, I wanted to get a sense of what do they want to be thought of as, as a generation? What are the things they want their friends to be saying about them? And so we gave this battery of 30, 35 different words you can choose.

KRISTOL: This is the whole generation, not just Republicans.

ANDERSON: No, the whole generation, not just Republicans. We said what two or three words do you most wish your friends would use to describe you? And we offered up all of these words that you read in your style section trend piece about millennials: open-minded, tolerant, optimistic, adventurous, unique, cool – all of those things. You know what the top four words were that they chose? Intelligent, caring, hardworking and responsible. That sounds lovely, right? I can work with that, we can work with that.

So I think that, for the most part, a lot of the stereotype of millennials that gets built up is in part because the millennials that do exhibit those bad characteristics dramatically over-index in careers in politics, media and places where that story gets told a lot.

We think of millennials as like a snowflake on a college campus who is very upset because there's a speaker coming to town who is going to hurt their gentle sensibilities, when most millennials are not actually going to get a four year college degree at all.

I mean, the experience of millennials, I think, is too often viewed through the lens of the kids at elite institutions who are going to be fine and they are going to have wonderful careers in politics or media or entertainment. And that's what we think this generation is. And most of them, that's not their reality. They are just intelligent, caring, hard-working – that's what they want to be known for.

KRISTOL: How big is the gap within millennials between college and non-college, working-class and upper middle class? I mean, is it as big as it is, I mean, [Charles Murray](#) and others have written books and many studies showing it coming apart. Do you see that among millennials, or do you see that there is more in common, having grown up in the same technological world, the same post-Cold War world, etc.?

ANDERSON: I mean, I think it depends on the issue, right? So if it's something like LGBT rights, I don't think there's a big difference between college and non-college. There may be a difference in the way you talk about things or certain debates over, say, transgender rights may look different on a college campus than they do for 27-year-olds who are at a community college. Those debates are going to look different certainly depending on where you're at.

But I think a lot of the ways that we just think about millennials are very narrowly tailored to the campus experience and to folks that wind up going and working in these tech industries, they move to cities and they don't have cars, they Uber everywhere, they want their organic food and their craft beer. But that doesn't mean that a millennial who doesn't go to college doesn't also want craft beer when they go to the grocery store.

I think again, these things are kind of on a, it's on a spectrum. And I think we often focus on the most extreme cases and that comes to define what people think a generation is.

KRISTOL: But it does sound to me like the non-college millennials have a fair amount in common with the college millennials as a matter of lived experience and references.

ANDERSON: Sure. And you do hear – I mean, I do go around the country and I talk to a lot of folks in the corporate world about how to understand these millennials in your workplace. Like they're not actually an

alien species, but there are certain things that, whether you're college or non-college, the access to the internet, the access to smart phones: We expect feedback more quickly. We expect to have a very clear trajectory in our career where we're at point A and I want to know how I can be the boss next year. These are things that are not just confined to the college millennial, but I think are products of our expectations about the speed with which the world works, our ability to have our voice heard and to have feedback about us as well.

I mean, think about it. If you went to a restaurant 30 years ago and it wasn't a very good experience, what was your recourse? You could tell your friends, you could not go back. Now you can post a review on Yelp, – I took an Uber to get here and my driver was lovely and I'll give him five stars and you can give him a tip. And you can give that sort of instant feedback and have your voice heard everywhere. And I think that is something that defines, whether you're a college or a non-college millennial. When you're in the workplace, you're expecting that level of feedback. You're expecting that level of speed as well. So there are certain things that I do think bind them together that are a product of the technology that we are all growing up under, rather than whether we live in a rural or urban area or what have you.

KRISTOL: Does that translate into politics, though, sort of getting back to politics. What you just said sounds like well, that is kind of Republican-ish: Uber, competition, monopolies. And then they all vote for Sanders.

ANDERSON: So one of my favorite presentations I have ever given was about the world of government data and the open data movement. This movement that is, can we take government where we're using paper, digitize it, where we have access to information. Can we make it public so that people can build apps to help make things more efficient? You know, I write in my book about in Chicago somebody built a way to tell if there was sewage in the river in Chicago because this was data that was available, but now you've allowed a citizen to build an app on it. So can we make government work a little more like some of these companies that people are used to engaging with?

And the open data movement is so dominated by the left. And so I always make the case, go talk to your Republican friends about this stuff because it actually matches up with our values so well: efficiency, making sure there's accountability. If something is not working, you can get rid of it quickly. These are all things that line up. And so it frustrates me endlessly that Republicans have not taken the opportunity to talk about this at all. This is a no-brainer sort of things that Republicans can and should be leaning into to win over younger voters that we have just completely abdicated.

An example that I like to give is from the 2012 election. Barack Obama was giving an interview to MTV and he gets asked, "Look, Mr. President, young people nowadays, they look at someone like a Mark Zuckerberg and they want to be the next founder of something big or they want to change the world. What have you done as president to make it easier for someone to start up a small business that might change the world?"

And I am thinking well, I wonder what his answer is going to be, what has he done as president to make it easier for small businesses? Because I have a feeling it is going to be tough for him to answer. And his answer was amazing. He said, "You know, we passed a bill that allowed for Kickstarter, crowd funding. We repealed some financial regulations that were making it so that small investors couldn't invest over the internet. And when we repealed that, now you can raise small amounts of money online."

And I thought, he just took credit for Kickstarter and he did it by talking about repealing bad regulation. And it was a bill that passed out of a Republican congress with more Republican votes than Democratic votes, but you never heard a Republican talk about it on college campuses. And so there are opportunities there and we just regularly miss them.

KRISTOL: And so those would be sort of economic deregulation, decentralization, individual opportunity and so forth?

ANDERSON: Sure. I mean, government does not work the way most things the young people interact with work. And it certainly doesn't work as well as those things.

KRISTOL: No, you made this argument in the book and this is why – And the Reformicons pick up a lot of this, old friends of ours, in 2014, 2015. One thought, the Marco Rubio, Scott Walker, young senator and congressman and governor, Charlie Baker, whatever, they are not individually that young, but the kind of reformist Republicans is the wave of the future. There seem to be a lot of them floating around, they seem to be, they could attract younger voters in certain ways.

ANDERSON: It didn't wind up working out quite that way.

KRISTOL: History often does fake one out, you know.

ANDERSON: I still think that there's something about the core of the ideas there that can work. I think what is also interesting on the flip side is you've got, whether it's a Bernie Sanders here in the U.S. or a Corbyn over in the UK or Marine Le Pen. Let's take the French election. You know, I wrote a whole column about Emmanuel Macron, like long before he was up in the polls, as this kind of Marco Rubio-ish figure in France. He's young, he's kind of center right-ish market oriented, but still all about like engagement with the world and not retrenching.

And you know, he'll stand against the Marine Le Pen isolationist, anti-immigrant view. And Macron did worst among young voters in France. You've got someone like a Jeremy Corbyn who is very kind of populist, does great with young voters.

Here in the U.S., Bernie Sanders, very populist. Not the hippest, coolest guy on the block, not talking about "let's have these technocratic reforms of government to make it more efficient." He's talking about revolution. And yet, young people on college campuses are gravitating to him. And I think part of it is just this authenticity issue, right? That it sounds like when Bernie Sanders talks, he actually believes what he's saying and he's not just trying to noodle around the edges and make things three percent better for you next year. That he wants to blow it all up and start over again because you've been given a raw deal.

And I can see why that's a more appealing message than, "You know what? Let's take government and let's roll it back a little bit by making it a little more like these companies that you are used to engaging with and let's make it a little more efficient." That's not an insanely compelling message. And so I understand why at the ballot box it didn't wind up working out for Republicans.

II. Millennials and American Politics (35:28 – 1:17:57)

KRISTOL: So yes, you say all of these millennials voting for Sanders, not something one might have predicted. Does this fix itself? Do they get mugged by reality? People say this all the time, they get a paycheck, they see the tax bite. They get older, they have families, they suddenly become more conservative. What is your sense of that?

ANDERSON: I wish, but I don't think it is going to be that easy.

There is that line: "If you're young and conservative, you have no heart. If you're old and liberal, you have no brain." This idea that everyone starts off progressive and then reality shows up and everybody becomes conservative. It's not happening. It's not happening for millennials.

Some of the biggest problems that Republicans are having is actually not in the last few years with the youngest voters because we have already lost so badly with that generation, there's not too much further to go. It's 30 somethings. It's the people who were in, just got out of college when Obama was first

elected. They are reaching their 30s. They are starting families. They are buying homes. And they're not becoming Republican in the process.

And I think part of that is the cultural views. Their cultural views are not becoming more conservative as they get older, right? These are views that are still baked into them. The way they think – family is very important to them, but they're okay with defining family in unique ways that previous generations haven't.

And as long as the Republican Party remains one that seems like it is preserving a time that is long past, these now 30 somethings have not experienced and don't really want to experience, why would you vote for, or join, a party that wants to bring that back?

KRISTOL: Is it the social, cultural, religious sort of issues that are the biggest barrier, do you think?

ANDERSON: I think in the short run, yes.

I also think that Republicans have not done a great job of explaining why the free market is okay. After the financial crisis it was well, that's the free market caused that financial crisis, so free markets are bad. And that was never, I think, effectively challenged. And so you do also have in this generation a deep skepticism of the idea that like markets are good and can efficiently allocate capital and make society better and have lifted 2 billion out of poverty. That's not an argument that has been made effectively.

KRISTOL: But you don't think that's an argument that they would necessarily resist, it is just that it hasn't been made effectively?

ANDERSON: I think it needs to be made sooner than later, but I don't think it's impossible to overcome that.

I *do* think that where there is an irreconcilable difference is on the social, cultural issues. Where Republicans right now have a coalition that is very strongly around this idea of we need to make America great *again* because it was great in the past when the way we thought of race or gender or what have you and patriotism, we need to reclaim all of that. And I think for a lot of millennials, there's just not a lot from that basket of stuff from the past they want to reclaim. They kind of like this change.

I mean, the world is changing very quickly and change causes anxiety. And what Donald Trump was able to do was tap into that anxiety. People who don't like the way, the shape of American family is changing. People who don't like they have to push one for English. People who don't like that now you've got people kneeling instead of pledging to the flag at the football game.

And Donald Trump is going to stand up and say it's okay to think that not all of this change is good. That it's not good that you're losing your job because it's going overseas. It's not good to think that these economic and technological changes that are supposed to be so wonderful. If they're bad for you, than I think they're bad and we should stop them.

But for millennials, that is not where they're at. They're okay with this change. They're fine with the speed of it and that anxiety is not there for them. And as long as we are the party on the Republican side of taking that anxiety and saying, it's okay. Instead of embracing these changes and saying, look, technological change is good, here's how we can fix government. Demographic change is good, here's how we can, you know, it moves America forward and here's why immigration is great. We have set all those arguments aside. We have conceded them. And as long as we are not engaging in that, I think we're going to be losing millennials, *even* as those millennials get much older.

KRISTOL: I suppose one instance of this is religion. I mean I was a little stunned that the evangelical vote went so overwhelmingly and the religious vote in general, let's say the church-going vote, maybe

that's a better – is so overwhelmingly for Trump, who is not exactly the embodiment of those values one wouldn't think.

But maybe that was part of the same thing, do you think? I mean that the Trump voters wanted a country that somehow respected religion more, you might say. Or respected what they thought to be religious values more and the millennials, not so much. Is that true that millennials are less religious, less church-going?

ANDERSON: Less religious, less church-going, but not less spiritual or faithful. If you ask them, do you pray daily? If you ask them, do you consider yourself a person of faith, they are just as likely as the Gen-Xers, when the Gen-Xers were in their 20s, to say yes to that question.

But when it comes to religious identification, I am a part of this particular creed or I go to religious services every week, that is significantly on the decline for millennials. And I think if you think about what the Republican coalition looks like – white, married, somewhat upscale, goes to church on Sunday, these sorts of things – it's not just that millennials are young and that's why they are not going for the Republican Party, it's that they're also less likely than their parents' generation to choose to get married. They're less likely than their parents' generation to go to religious services every week, and to identify with a particular religious tradition.

So these things that are supposed to make you more conservative, they're just things millennials are opting out of in greater numbers.

KRISTOL: And diversity, I guess, right? I mean there's the lived experience of millennials is very different I think.

KRISTOL: Absolutely. Well, and this is a huge piece of – You cannot separate out Republican struggles with non-white voters and Republican struggles with young voters because the diversity of this generation is enormous.

You mentioned that there is this article in *The Washington Post* that kind of got me a little frustrated about saying, oh, well, Republicans are, it's fine with young voters. And part of the argument was, well, if you break millennials out by race, Republicans are actually doing fine with white millennials. Well, that's lovely. But that's not how you win an election because we do have a very diverse country. And so, if Republicans are doing okay with white millennials but whites are a shrinking piece of the pie, and you have a generation where it's something like less than two-thirds of millennials are white non-Hispanic, that is – this is an enormous change.

You have states like New Mexico, where most babies being born, and kids in public schools, are Latino. I mean it's the changing demographics of America. This is all happening. Just because Donald Trump got elected does not negate these long-term headwinds that Republicans are facing, if they don't do better with voters from the Latino community, African-American community, Asian-American community.

KRISTOL: Well, let's talk about Asian-Americans because there's like a lot of them near where I live in Fairfax County, a lot of our kids' friends are Asian-Americans and so forth. There, you'd think, that some of the reasons you can understand African-Americans wouldn't be Republican. Maybe Latinos wouldn't be because of the Republican positions on immigration. With Asian-Americans it's very hard to see what the barrier is. But the numbers are horrible, right?

ANDERSON: And they've grown more and more horrible in just the last ten years. And in 1992, I believe Asian-American voters broke for Republicans in that election. It used to be a very Republican voting group. And it's just been this trend line to where now they vote almost the same as Latino voters: very, very heavily Democratic.

KRISTOL: But socio-economically they're pretty well-off.

ANDERSON: Right, so it's economically well-off.

KRISTOL: And you'd think they might be interested in Republican messages on the markets and hostility to government running healthcare, all these positions. So what overcomes this? Because that is the culture, the culture stuff?

ANDERSON: Yeah, it is – I think it is very, very challenging with Donald Trump as the president and as the face and leader of the Republican Party, to see how this gets fixed. As long as the party remains one that is constantly kind of signaling to, I think, white Americans that their anxiety about this change is okay and completely rational. Then those who are not white are going to look at that and think, you don't want me, you don't want me to be a part of this? And they'll have every reason to believe that.

KRISTOL: So your analysis was, and this is where – so, how important is Trump I guess is the way I'll ask this question. I mean, the Republicans already were in trouble, some of these trends were going in the wrong direction already. You and others wrote books, articles, consulted on reversing some of them. In retrospect, was a reversal – could it have been reversed, would a nomination have changed things? Was it more deeply baked in somehow?

ANDERSON: I don't want to say a Rubio nomination – you know, I don't want to peg it on a specific thing. I think, with every passing year it's harder and harder for us to undo the damage that was done. You can imagine, after the 2008 election, Republicans looking at those numbers and going, oh my gosh, we need to do something about this. And kind of having their act together in time to have fixed it for the 2012 election, and maybe you're still going to do badly with younger voters because Obama was very popular. But you know, and look, Mitt Romney did do better than John McCain did.

KRISTOL: And there was a lot of thought that it was an Obama problem with Republicans.

ANDERSON: Right.

KRISTOL: A uniquely, attractive to younger voters candidate.

ANDERSON: Obama was not on the ballot this time around. Hillary Clinton was on the ballot, who was uniquely unappealing to millennials. And yet Donald Trump basically ran the same as Mitt Romney had four years earlier.

KRISTOL: No, people like me, and I think you too, and believe me I don't need to be proselytizing for Rubio, but, Rubio a tight candidate. It could have been Walker, it could have been maybe Cruz even if he's very conservative he's – it could have been Jindahl, and all kinds of people. The idea was, finally – I remember saying something over --

ANDERSON: They put the A-team on the field.

KRISTOL: Well, finally the Republicans get the younger candidate. Just in a very sort of stupid empirical way, for several elections now, really back to '92 with the slight exception of Bush, but he was the son of a President, the Republicans had the older white guy, and the Democrats had the younger hipper candidate. And you've got to think that has some effect on younger people's voting. Obviously it doesn't do it by itself. They don't vote simply for the younger candidate.

And I did think this would move a few points having a Rubio, Walker, Jindahl type against Hillary Clinton. We ended up of course with a Trump type, so that's – history fakes you out. But you do think it could have changed? I mean it wasn't like -

ANDERSON: Oh, sure, I mean I think there are things we could have been doing all along, and I think especially in the 2016 election we had an opportunity. Especially running against someone like Hillary Clinton, who had all of these weaknesses with millennials, to say, “no, we are the party of what’s fresh and what’s new.”

And if you look at the average age of a member of the House of Representatives for instance. Republicans -much, much younger. You look at the very youngest members, we’ve got folks like the Adam Kinsingers, Will Hurds, I mean, Elise Stefanics. We’ve got exciting, vibrant personalities and thinkers on our side.

KRISTOL: And the Senate too. The Republican conference is much younger, yes.

ANDERSON: In the Senate, very much so.

KRISTOL: 2014 was the year of young Republicans getting elected.

ANDERSON: Yeah. And we are just now beginning to see on the Democratic side grappling with this, right? In California, with Diane Feinstein, are we going to primary her? And so Democrats are finally, I think, realizing well, gosh, we have a generation problem, at least within our party.

And so you do see in polling data, young voters don’t love the Democratic Party. Their views on social and cultural issues align more with the Democratic platform at the moment. Their views on economic issues, unfortunately, I think align more with where Democrats tend to stand.

But the Democratic Party as an institution is not beloved by millennials. And I think that’s the one thing - Republicans keep getting this like stay of execution because Democrats just can’t close the deal, they can’t lock these people in. Because I think millennials very rightly kind of don’t love labels. Why would you want to be a part of either political party in this kind of disgusting and unpleasant political climate? Just say you’re an Independent, and you know, that’s the easier choice.

So we keep being given a reprieve because Democrats also have their own baggage, also don’t have a message, also have just sort of – they’ve coasted on the Obama thing and they held on to it in part because they ran against Donald Trump who, I could not have created someone in a lab more ill-suited to winning over young voters.

Republicans have gotten lucky that Democrats have not taken advantage of our blunders; at the same time, we have blundered plenty. And it’s as if both sides –

think what it really comes down to is this. I don’t actually think that either side views young voters as mattering very much. And there’s this – there’s this vicious cycle, right? Where politicians say, well, young voters don’t turn out, they don’t vote. And mathematically to an extent, that’s true. You’ve got 85 million of them, but if only a third of them are turning out to vote, well, it’s not that many. So then they don’t pay attention to young voters. And then young voters go, well, these politicians don’t care about me. They aren’t talking about my issues. And so then they stay home which then sort of can fuel this vicious cycle.

Obama broke that cycle to an extent. But Democrats I don’t think have figured it out. And in some of the special elections we’ve seen this year, they’ve not really figured out fully how to harness young people opposed to Trump.

So Republicans still have a chance, but I think with every passing day of this administration, the damage is getting more and more permanent.

KRISTOL: Yes, so let's talk about that. As much as we don't want to in a sense, but it is reality. I mean Trump in a way was an accident I think. I mean he didn't have to win the nomination. He was lucky with having a Bush to run against as a framing kind of thing. And then with Clinton in general. He was lucky to have sixteen candidates. Whatever, he was a skilled demagogue. But he won. And now he's President.

And I do think some of our friends underestimate – it's one thing to have candidates who aren't super attractive to young voters, a McCain or something like that, Romney. Different generation, different level of experiences against an Obama.

It's something to have a president for four years, presumably. I mean, that really does, that has an impact, it seems to me, but correct me if I'm wrong, among voters that is very different from just a campaign that's over and gone. And that's where I think you're right to say day after day, week after week, month after month. I mean, most of the effect Trump has had has not happened yet, presumably, because he has only been president for six, or something like that, of his first term.

ANDERSON: I think in addition to the idea that a president can very strongly stamp into people's mind what a party is, it is also about the party's voters. So it's not just about any individual leader. Because you can, even in a presidential level, kind of explain away, "Oh, well it was a fluke, a black swan event, it happens."

But Republican voters are with President Trump. They have, for the most part, gotten in line behind him. When he says things, like when he talks about the Charlottesville protests, and he says – well, there were some, these people had permits. I mean, these are things that I'll then go and I'll do a focus group a few weeks later and your average Republican voter will go like – well, but they had permits. You know, and these things have permeated where it's not just about Trump, but it's about who the Republican Party's voters are.

KRISTOL: And I suppose in reaction to that, Republican members of Congress and candidates don't want to antagonize the voters they need in primaries.

ANDERSON: Right, these are the people that are voting for you and in many ways –

KRISTOL: So they don't really distance themselves from Trump as much as they might, right?

ANDERSON: Right. And I get, I also understand voters going, "well, I don't want just want to elect people that are going to throw spitballs at the president all day; I want people that are going to try to get things done and accomplish something and it seems like Congress isn't doing that."

So I get Republican voter frustration with Republican leaders who seem insufficiently loyal to or interested in working with President Trump. I get that. But I think if you are somebody that is not a Republican and you are considering do you want to join the party, I think it's not even just about Trump, but it's like, "Who are these voters who I am going to be joining. What's this club that I am getting into?"

And I think as long as Republican voters stay very loyal to President Trump, I think that just continues to make his mark on the long-term brand of the party more and more solid. It's harder and harder to make the argument Trump is not really a Republican when Republican voters are 85, 90 percent behind him.

KRISTOL: And Republican members of Congress too, I guess. I mean, there is this Gen-Z poll that I think NBC did about a month ago in September. Party identity is pretty striking. I mean, the favorable/unfavorable, I think, among millennials with Republicans was about 28/58. Democrats was 43/42.

So they don't love the Democrats, but they really, almost two to one, are against the Republicans. And there was a – you must have seen a million polls like this and done a million like this yourself – "Do you

think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent or what?" These millennials? All adults: Democrat 34, Republican 18, Independent 31. 34 to 18 is a pretty big gap, right?

ANDERSON: Yeah.

KRISTOL: Among whites it's even, 25/24.

ANDERSON: Right, and again, that's the data point that – oh, but that's not, these are not sustainable numbers. And look, I am also of the mind that if, was it 80,000 voters in five counties across America? The alternate universe was like Hillary Clinton, narrowly, edges out this election. Then it's all autopsy 2.0 and oh, Republicans – you know, people had the pieces ready to go about the Republican Party's long-term problems. Things just like this that are still 100 percent true.

Those facts, the fact that young voters are walking away from the GOP, did not go away because well, we won the White House. It just meant that Donald Trump was able to have this kind of last gasp moment of holding and pulling together an old coalition that is just not going to be able to be the coalition you win the White House with in 2024, certainly.

And so these are the numbers that have been keeping me up at night for eight years. And now I'm finally at a point where it's like the Republican Party is so satisfied with itself right now and does not think things like that are a problem and just does not see the train that is coming to hit it. It's very frustrating, but it will take –

I will say, I do think there is something that could have been done in the Trump era, even with Trump as president, to win over younger voters. And that is, that if you have young voters that are really interested in populism, right, this idea of someone who is a little more plain spoken, a little more willing to be bold. Okay, you can see a version of Donald Trump that kind of goes there. That is willing to be, to radically blow up the way that we've don't things, old programs that haven't been working. This is a generation that's open to embracing change. Well, he was the change candidate, right?

So early on in the Trump presidency I thought well, if he comes in and he really just dramatically reforms the way we do things and really does apply the best lessons of business to reforming government and is a bold – maybe this will work and maybe he can win over younger voters.

And none of the polling that I have seen since inauguration day has suggested, nor many of the actions he has taken as president, have suggested to me that that is what is happening.

KRISTOL: You could argue it's the worst of all worlds, not to be even gloomier, but why not? You are getting sort of a certain kind of national, let's call it white nationalist, whatever, make America great again rhetoric which isn't attractive to young voters, that's the rhetoric.

And then policy, you're getting very orthodox Republican policies, or nothing much. I mean, no big change. Maybe some of it is proposed nominally, but no real fight for change. So the kind of stuff that you might think would appeal to younger voters on the other side: "he's really changing government," as you said, and, "he's really reforming the way things work across the board." You don't see that either. So it strikes me as kind of the worst of both worlds now.

ANDERSON: You can argue that the passage of the Affordable Care Act is a big piece of the reason why Democrats have had such historic losses in Congress. That passing the ACA is something that did enormous political damage in the short to medium term to the Democratic Party.

But you know what? They changed the healthcare system. He made it in the image that he wanted to see. And that was a long-term lasting policy outcome, even if it had the political downside. What I wonder is will Republicans wind up with long-term political downside and not even short-term policy gains?

KRISTOL: Right. And you look at these numbers, so let's take Democrat 34, Republican 18, Independent 31. If you are a 35 year old thinking of going into politics, don't you look at these numbers – you don't want to be Democrat, you don't agree with them on foreign policy or on economics – don't you think, maybe I should be an Independent and not a Republican? I mean, isn't it better to be with the 31 to start with and then get those 18 over than to start with the 18 and have to work so hard to get the 31 percent of the Independents over?

ANDERSON: Well, I think it depends on if you view that the – well, first of all, the reasons why a two party system exists in America are so deeply entrenched. So I think it is reasonable to say – look, I don't agree with the president and I think the Republican Party is off well on the wrong track. But I think ultimately for my world view, my temperament, *conservatism* is what I am about; the Republican Party ought to be the right vehicle for that.

And so I can do one of two things. I can leave and I can be Independent and I can say you know what? These guys are doomed anyways, I am leaving and something else will form. Or, do I hang around until, and try to reform it, and try and try and try to make this party what I think it should be, what it was when I joined.

And I think – I don't think it's wrong to choose, because that is what I have chosen, to stick around and try and try and try to fix it and bring it back and make it something that is what it was all about when you joined or what you thought it was when you joined.

KRISTOL: So frame – if one can fix the Republican Party, it's obviously easier than running against the Independent candidate who is starting a third party. But you think framing yourself as a kind of independent minded Republican or something isn't impossible.

ANDERSON: Well, Donald Trump framed himself as an independent minded Republican. I do think framing oneself as an independent minded anything is going to be very appealing to a generation that kind of doesn't like these labels all together.

Again, which is why the Democratic Party has this big problem. Their numbers aren't great, either.

But I do, my hope is that for young people who they may not like – the president bothers them, but they still believe that we can't just expect government to fix everything. That we need to understand how people's incentives work and their values work. And lean into the parts of human nature that we can use to cultivate towards good rather than just expecting government to fix everything. I would like the Republican Party to be a party that can embrace those folks.

KRISTOL: You mentioned conservatism a moment ago. Do you think that term has been – a) how positive was it already and b) how much has it been damaged by Trump?

ANDERSON: So I think the term conservative – interestingly, I remember seeing a bunch of data before the election where when people were asked where do you put Donald Trump on the ideological spectrum, very few actually put him conservative.

If you asked it about the whole Republican field, he was typically among the least likely to be pegged as conservative. So I think that term actually has a better chance of being salvaged than the term 'Republican.' I think it's hard at this point to argue that Donald Trump is not a Republican. He's the president. To the victor go the spoils. He gets to define what that word means.

But I don't think he gets to take the word 'conservative.' And I don't think he has any interest in going for that world. He himself has said that he doesn't really think of himself in that way. So I think that term is more salvageable. That is very different, though, than how does that term resonate with young people.

And I think overwhelmingly you see young people saying I'm moderate, that moderate seems like the right word to choose when asked.

Or, again, this reclaiming of the – not of liberal, but of progressive, of that being the sort of new term that is – you're putting yourself in the ideological spectrum for millennials. That sounds like a term – oh, I like progressive, I'll be progressive.

KRISTOL: Do you think it was wise of the left to go to progressive from liberal?

ANDERSON: I think so. And I think as someone who --

KRISTOL: And wise for that –

ANDERSON: I think it was wise for them because they are banking into the term, the concept of progress. They are owning the word 'progress' within their own description. Whereas liberal, I mean, I think conservatives have done a pretty good job of kind of demonizing that term.

And also, you ask people anywhere else in the world what liberal means, it means something very different. Actually it means probably something a little more along the lines of what you and I believe.

KRISTOL: That is why I thought, occasionally, we should revive the term liberal. We believe in liberal democracy, we believe in liberal –

ANDERSON: – leave the word liberal alone, given what it means globally. But yeah, I think from a language perspective, it is smart for Democrats to go towards the word 'progressive.'

KRISTOL: And something like center or centrist, that kind of stuff, moderate. Does that just seem squishy or is that where people want to be, like a candidate running for Congress or something.

ANDERSON: I think that words like centrist and moderate, I mean, I do think that voters in many ways are less ideological. They are more tribal these days, but less ideological than people think.

And so if you are labeling yourself with something that puts you on an ideological spectrum, that is anywhere besides, I'm a strong progressive or a strong conservative, because that's what you would need to do in a primary. For a general [election], I think general election voters are not looking for someone who positions themselves ideologically. They are looking for someone who is going to get results, be it problem solver, those sorts of things. They are looking for outcomes rather than where do you place yourself along this spectrum.

So from a language perspective they're – which is not say that there aren't a ton of moderate voters in America. But I also think that the idea if we were to have a centrist movement emerge, it would look, I think it would look different than many people – when they think about centrist, they think, I hear a lot of young people say, "Well, I'm fiscally conservative, but I'm socially progressive. And so I want a centrist party that does those things." And the reality of the data is that that type of view is few and far between.

That is, for the most part, people tend to have more socially conservative views and more economically progressive views or wanting more activist government. You know, "keep your government hands off my Medicare," that type of thing. So that is more, if you were looking for a cluster of people who fit outside of where the two parties are these days, *that's* much more where it is than that kind of libertarian view.

So again, that's the risk of using the word centrist. Centrist can actually mean a lot of different things.

KRISTOL: I do think, or do you think, I guess I will put it this way, that given the attachment to the party is less than it was, is that correct, with younger voters, especially. They don't really think -

ANDERSON: The power of the party is less. Attachment to the party is less, but I think tribalism around party is greater.

KRISTOL: Right. But if you want to run against tribe Trump or tribe Elizabeth Warren, I mean, I do wonder whether 2020 we could have, every four years it doesn't seem to happen, but one could have the kind of independent candidate who – I mean, if ever there was going to be a chance for an independent candidate, I presume it would be a Trump, Elizabeth Warren race, which is a pretty likely race, right?

ANDERSON: Well, but I think if you're going to have an independent candidate, they have to be one that stands for something that is very bold. So think about a Ross Perot. He wasn't successful, but you kind of knew what Ross Perot was all about.

KRISTOL: Right.

ANDERSON: And I think sometimes when we talk about sort of independence and centrism, it becomes this like – well, if only we could all sit down at the table and talk we would all agree. When there are real fundamental differences that I have with my friends on the left about what the role of government should be and how we should deal with entitlement programs.

You know, there are some things where gosh, if we just talk, we can probably come to an agreement. But there are a lot of things where we have some very fundamental differences.

So I think the idea for someone being a third party or an independent person, it can't just be – well, I just want everybody to hold hands and be friends and that's what I'm going to run on. I think you still have to be very bold in what you stand for, even if it is a collection of issue positions that look different than the collection of issue positions that constitute the other two coalitions.

KRISTOL: And you have been through campaigns. How important would the person be? I mean, it strikes me that to break through, wouldn't you have to be a sort of outsized personality?

ANDERSON: I think personality does matter a lot. And look, I'm not a fully jaded political consultant who says issues don't matter and voters don't care about policy at all. Because I think most voters, they are very busy. They may not be watching cable news 24/7 and thank goodness they aren't.

KRISTOL: But they are getting bad fake news from Facebook.

ANDERSON: People think about their policy views in relation to their own experiences and their own lives and they come to what they view as common sense way to approach something. And why can't Washington just do this common sense thing I want them to do?

But I also think it's about, is the person whose name I'm putting my vote with, do I feel like they have the character and the temperament to execute on those things effectively? And I think you may agree with all of someone's issue positions, but if you feel that they are someone who is not actually going to do what they said they'll do when they get elected, or that they might be a bad person, or that they don't, at a gut level, get people like you, I think it's harder to overcome that.

And that's why I think somebody like a Ronald Reagan, a once in a generation politician who can both have clear thing he stands for, but also have a majority of people saying yeah, he gets people like me, he cares about people like me. It is so important. You have to have both the message and the right messenger.

KRISTOL: Since I mentioned Facebook, I will ask you about that, since I'm curious myself. I mean, you've done a lot of focus groups and I think that's one of things you really almost specialize in, right, as

much as the general polls. And those are more, you have more comparative advantage on that. We all get to see some public polls whereas we all – sit in and watch focus groups. How serious is the fake news – not using it in Trump’s way, but in the real way, problem?

I was a little struck at a gathering I was at recently where several people, pretty well educated people, people who follow things, active in their community, told me stories that I just thought, they are not true. I mean, but they have seen them, not even seen them on cable news, they heard about them from friends, it was forwarded to them on email, they saw it on Facebook pages. I don't know, do you find that in the focus groups or not so much?

ANDERSON: Well, I mean, yeah. You will frequently in focus groups people will say like, “I thought I, I think I heard this story that ...” and they’ll say something that’s not true. I mean, I had a focus group of young voters in, I think it was Colorado about a year ago and these were young Progressives. And one of them said, “Well, you know, one of the things that I liked best about Barack Obama was that he was okay with people having whatever religion they wanted. I mean, he was Muslim but he was okay.”

And I thought, oh my gosh, this is a young Progressive, right? I mean, and so, like the fake news problem is not just a Facebook problem, right? There was, didn’t – that all started with a forwarded email somewhere, you know, the bad chain emails and things.

Fake news is – real fake news is not a new thing. But what is pretty scary is the way that now people can be targeted with things that, you know. There’s enough out there that, there’s enough of a shadow of doubt cast over things that are legitimate and illegitimate. The people say, “Well, I don’t really believe everything that I see.” But they also don’t immediately dismiss everything that they see.

And there’s this sense of, “Well, I don’t know that I trust real media – quote unquote ‘real media outlets’ – to give me the right story. So this thing that I’m seeing that’s being reported by some website I’ve never heard of? I shouldn’t really trust it, but you know, what if they’ve got the real story, and these other news outlets are trying to cover it up?”

And so, the degradation of people’s ability to sift fact from fiction I think has been aided by people’s, in some ways justifiable, declining trust in the mainstream media.

But you now also have the ability to just be so sophisticated in your targeting of exactly the people that you need to move. Or you may not even persuade them that your fake story is right, but all you need to do is either get them to click on it because they’re curious and you’ll make some money off of it, or just plant that seed of doubt. They go, “Well, you know, it’s probably not true, but I mean I don’t know – I don’t really like Hillary Clinton. So it’s not inconceivable to me that she did whatever horrible thing is in this story.”

And that I think is the danger. It’s just the increased sowing of seeds of doubt everywhere.

KRISTOL: We began by talking about your generation being defined in a way by the internet, but here we’ve come full circle which is, this is a characteristic I think of the internet or modern communications, that makes one wonder about the future of democracy. To the degree that you really can have a combination of just generalized leveling of all distinctions of the gatekeepers – not that the gatekeepers are always right. No filters – not that the filters were always good. But at some point you really do need to distinguish between true and false.

And then the targeting which really allows for malicious efforts to convince people of things that aren’t so, or raise doubts about things enough to affect their voting and their civic participation, I mean.

ANDERSON: Yeah, well, and it can put information out there that then can't really be countered. I mean, if you write an op-ed for a magazine or a newspaper, and people think that it is wrong or you write a newspaper article and your reporting is shoddy, you know, it is public and it is challengeable.

Whereas in many of these cases it is someone throws up a website somewhere, they write a bunch of stuff that's untrue, and then you can just filter those ads and links to those places to people who, where, you know, the antibodies may not be able to find it and go after it, and say no, no, no this is wrong, because it is secret.

And I think that's why you're seeing pressure now on Facebook to talk more about what targeting mechanisms were being used when these ads were being bought.

Like I am not actually of the belief that the 2016 election was fraudulent because Russia bought Facebook ads. But I do think that in our democracy, you know, we started at the beginning of our conversation talking about how millennials have grown up in an era where you have access to all of this information. And that's great, but you also have access to a lot of really bad information.

And if we have not as a society built up this sort of cognitive muscles to really be able to sift truth from fiction, it does mean the volume of information may not actually wind up on balance being such a great thing.

KRISTOL: I mean that would be interesting for a foreign policy agenda to try to think through, which is, you know, are there ways to improve – I mean it's now just unregulated basically. And that's fine, that's what probably both of our instincts would be, you don't want the government regulating stuff. On the other hand, there's something a little crazy about the current situation.

ANDERSON: Well, and technically you would think that – what I think scares me is I always go back to, okay, is this a problem that can be fixed by market forces, right? And if in a previous era a newspaper had just constantly gotten things wrong time and time and time again, their subscriber base is going to decline, no one will want to advertise with them, and they will go away. The market will fix that problem.

But here I'm wondering, what are the market mechanisms that are going to fix this fake news problem? And I don't know the answer to that yet. And my instinct is not to go, well, let's just regulate it. But I do wonder, are there things that can be done to create, to help consumers become savvier so that those market forces do work to address this problem?

KRISTOL: That'd be a good project for someone. Maybe some millennials have taken that -

ANDERSON: You've assigned me homework – great.

KRISTOL: – have taken it up. Well, you don't have to do it; just get other people to do it.

Final point? I mean, anything else? You've done so much, looked at the polling, advised candidates, seen the focus groups. Any other things that people just don't appreciate? What are the one or two things that people just get wrong consistently in terms of public opinion in general or millennial opinion specifically?

ANDERSON: Well, I guess we have to – I have to close on a brief half-hearted defense of the polling industry.

KRISTOL: Okay, no, good, do that.

ANDERSON: You know what? I mean, I've talked a lot through this conversation we've talked a lot about, oh, poll X shows that 20 percent of millennials think Y. But in this whole conversation about what

is fake and what is real, there's perhaps no bigger thing that Americans nowadays can point to, to say, "Well, I don't know if I trust the media." is, "Well, you guys said that Donald Trump wasn't going to be President. And he's President. So, explain that one to me?" And in the polling industry I think we bear some responsibility for that.

On the other hand, I think the problem is that polls are often used in the media to do things they are not built to do. You do a poll to get the broad contours of how people think about things. Do more people think A, or do more people think B?

The market research world, you know, what most people see of the polling world is just the very tip of the iceberg. Corporations, brands, they're doing so much more research than you could ever imagine, beyond the like daily tracking poll of Trump's job approval. And so, that industry still exists and still works because what it's trying to do is not measure, you know, is Hillary Clinton going to win 49.5 or 50.5 percent of votes in a state and polling is not perfect enough to do that.

And when we imbue polling with this notion that it is able to predict things with that level of precision. And then we have the forecasters go on and say, "Oh, well, based on the polls, Hillary Clinton has a 70 percent chance of winning." I think that's when we get into dangerous territory where we're asking polling to do things it's not built to do.

So I defend the industry on the grounds that, look, the national polls were actually pretty right in this election. Most of the state polls were right, but a handful of them in the upper Midwest were wrong and wrong catastrophically. And that's a problem and it needs to be fixed.

And I am the first one to criticize my own industry and I am not trying to be an apologist. But I do think what people get wrong is, it's not that the polls are fake news or that someone's out there trying to manipulate the polls to give a certain impression of things. It's that I think polls are too often asked to do something they're not built to do. And we need to get better about understanding what polls can and can't actually tell us about America.

KRISTOL: And final question, I am curious – maybe this is a strange question, but I'm curious of your answer. How much is – pollsters and those of us who do political stuff sometimes talk about attitudes and favorable or unfavorable and sometimes are sort of disconnected from reality. I mean, I guess I've always had the view, maybe it's a bit of a wishful view, that at the end of the day, reality matters most. And that attitudes of whether someone's successful or not will follow from manifest success or failure.

I was a little shaken by that in '92 when I thought George H.W. Bush did a pretty good job winding down the Cold War and completing Reagan's agenda on that, and we'd had 12 pretty good years of Republican governance, and we got clobbered in the '92 election, everyone was so unhappy with the state of the nation. It made me think, gee, is this attitude, is the favorable/unfavorable – is that connected to actually the way things are, or is it connected to just sort of psychological things that one can't divine?

And so how are we reality-based do you think? And it's an important part of our country's well-being obviously. Because there's no ways that the citizenry, if it's a self-governing country, are pretty reality-based, right? I mean you don't want people living in some fantasy world here.

ANDERSON: You don't. Well, but there is this really interesting disconnect. So, on – take attitudes toward the economy. If you asked people in September of last year, do you think the economy is on the right track or the wrong track? Democrats would tell you the economy is great, the Obama recovery is here, and we're about to elect a President Clinton, and the economy is great. And Republicans would tell you, the economy is terrible and that's why we need Trump to make America great again.

And not two weeks after the election, you asked that same question and suddenly views of how do you think the economy is doing have dramatically flipped. Did the stock market change dramatically in two

weeks? Did the unemployment rate double in two weeks? No, none of those things happened. But the way we think about reality-based external events is colored by our sort of internal mindset.

And so, even though I think you're right, reality drives things, I think the way people see reality drives their voting behavior in many cases. And that's why it's valuable to ask people their opinions on things, even things they may not be experiencing in that moment. Because ultimately those are all of the ingredients that are going to lead up to a decision, a vote, a purchase, something that they do.

And so, that's why I think it still matters to ask people these questions. We may have other data that says yes the economy is doing great; but it's also valuable to know what people's perceptions match up with that because that will drive political behavior, spending behavior and all sorts of other things.

KRISTOL: It's striking isn't it, how much Trump voters have followed Trump's lead. Republicans who previously were anti-Russia are now, say at least, they're somewhat sympathetic -

ANDERSON: But it cuts the other way, too. Democrats used to think Russia wasn't a problem, and now all of a sudden Russia's our greatest – so this is, you know, it's –

KRISTOL: But that sort of gets back to the original, what we began on really, which is Trump is a big fact, I do think.

I just saw something this morning, polls, attitudes towards the NFL. There's just – Republicans have always – I think are probably more football fans than Democrats and they've been pro-NFL on the whole. And Trump's been attacking them for the last three or four weeks and the number has fallen off a cliff. Republicans now dislike the NFL.

Now, how deep that goes, do they not watch the NFL games? Do they, you know. I'm not sure, maybe it's just they say it. That's what one wonders. But I'm a little spooked by the degree to which one President tweeting and making just sort of being demagogic frankly, can seem to convince at least temporarily, and maybe it is only temporary, 30 percent of the electorate, or 20 percent. Some real big number of the electorate, I guess maybe it's 15 or 20 percent, to change their mind about something that they watch every week on television.

It's not – you know, something they know about the NFL. It's sort of a funny thing to change your mind overnight, that you like football, do you like Pro Football, leads to disliking it. But maybe it's not permanent, I don't know, maybe it's just a sort of temporary thing. It is the tribalism I guess.

ANDERSON: Yeah, it is. It's that everything around me is permeated by my politics. And people will tell you they don't like that; they wish that their politics weren't everywhere. But at the same time, you follow cues from people who you believe share your values. And, "Well, I share values with President Trump. He fights for people like me. He says this is a bad organization. And look, why aren't they pledging to the flag?" And so, the strong signals from leaders who people believe share their values are very strong.

KRISTOL: So maybe we'll get some leaders who will give strong signals to the public that are a little different from the ones that -

ANDERSON: Well, one hopes so.

KRISTOL: One hopes – that's a good note on which to end. Kristen, thanks a lot for taking the time today.

And thank you for joining us on *Conversations*.

[END]