



# WTH is at stake in the 2020 election? Lessons from history on the danger of going from bad to worse

Episode #67 | September 10, 2020 | Danielle Pletka, Marc Thiessen, and Dr. Ruth Wisse

Danielle Pletka: Hi. I'm Danielle Pletka.

Marc Thiessen: I'm Marc Thiessen.

Danielle Pletka: Welcome back to our podcast. What the Hell Is Going On? Marc, what the hell is going on?

Marc Thiessen: First of all, what the hell is going on is we're back. And second thing that's going on is we're back in our studio, so if you notice the sound quality's a little bit better than Dany and I Zooming from wherever in the world we were in June, July, and August, it's because we're back at AEI, using our studio. And hopefully we'll be able to bring you both entertaining and interesting podcasts and also better quality podcasts at least now in the technical department as well. So that's good news.

Danielle Pletka: But enough about us. What are we talking about today?

Marc Thiessen: Well, we're talking about—we both came back in September. And the election's around the corner. And people are struggling with their choices, which I think we would both agree whether you support ... leaning Democrat, leaning Republican, our choices are imperfect, shall we say?

Danielle Pletka: Yes. Marc Thiessen, master of understatement. Honestly, I have this feeling, you come back and it's Labor Day. And in an election year, this is a weird year, obviously, because so many of the days have just looked the same. But I was forcibly reminded on the day after Labor Day of that movie from the 70s and 80s, just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water ... [hums Jaws theme]

Marc Thiessen: There you go.

Danielle Pletka: It's like Jaws. I feel like I think a lot of people are, on the one hand, unbelievably wound up about the election. And on the other hand, unbelievably conflicted about the election. One side is berserk and the other side is troubled.

Marc Thiessen: Well, here's the interesting thing that I want to get into with you is that you really didn't struggle with your choice in 2016 that much. You're struggling today, Dany.

- Danielle Pletka: I am. I think that the choices that we were confronted with in 2016 were very different. I don't like Hillary Clinton. I didn't think she was a terrible Secretary of State. But, I don't like the Clinton family. I don't like the notion that because your husband was president you get to be president, too, and that somehow that's the best form of revenge. I didn't like Hillary Clinton and I didn't vote for her. But when I looked at the choices among the Republicans, when we ended up with Donald Trump, no, it was absolutely obvious to me I wasn't going to vote for either of them.
- Danielle Pletka: And I will say also that I thought that my vote didn't matter, because I thought it was a done deal for Hillary Clinton because that's what absolutely everybody told me. Now, I'm much more conflicted, in large part, because, while everybody who listens to this podcast or has ever seen anything I've written or has ever seen me on TV knows I'm no fan of Donald J. Trump, I can't stand where the Democratic Party has gone. And I worry so profoundly. I think I may have even repeated this to you, Marc. But a friend, a good friend, who is a died-in-the-wool liberal said, "I would feel a lot better voting for Biden if I knew that the Senate was going to stay Republican." But the notion of having a Obama redux with the House and the Senate and a figurehead president all representing this Democratic Party that seems to have lost its moorings in America is terrifying.
- Marc Thiessen: Yeah. I agree with you. And, look, I can make the positive case for voting for Trump affirmatively, but I don't want to do that today because I think I want to ... What we're talking about here is the question of the lesser of two evils, right? That there are people out there who are unhappy with ... They might not be substantively unhappy with a lot of the Trump administration's decisions and his presidency from a — if you put the mute button on is an 80%, 70%, whatever your perspective is — positive thing.
- Marc Thiessen: But the mute button isn't on. Twitter is going, so they're uncomfortable with Trump the person. But it's not a question. People are saying the Democrats want to create this as a referendum on Donald Trump. It actually isn't a referendum on Donald Trump. It is a binary choice between two alternatives for how our nation's going to be governed. And the choice that the Democrats are giving us, I've used the analogy, which Trump has used as well, is that Joe Biden is a Trojan horse for socialism.
- Marc Thiessen: And you and I both worked with Biden for decades in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. We know him. He's a nice man. He's been wrong on everything, at least in foreign policy, as Robert Gates pointed out. But he's a nice man. He's bipartisan. He tried to reach across the aisle and work with Jesse Helms to get things done. So there's this nice genial exterior. But inside is an army of socialists. The Democrats want to open up the White House gates, the voters to say, "Oh, look at this guy. He's not threatening. He's no problem. Let's open up the White House gates and let him in."
- Marc Thiessen: Then out comes this army of socialists with Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren and Ocasio-Cortez and all the rest of them. If there's no check on them, because there won't be a Republican Senate if Biden is elected, they're going to run rough shod and change this country in fundamental ways in four years.

Danielle Pletka: Right. And that, I think, is why what's happened over the summer is so important. We've been gone as some of the worst rioting and destruction has taken place, for example, in Kenosha, in Wisconsin. But I think here the problem is not what the average Democrat thinks. I think the average Democrat is not some radical lunatic, building-burning, restaurant-interrupting, shooting, crazy person—just like I think the average Republican is also not that person. The issue here is that the Democratic elites represent that crazy. They represent that radicalism.

Danielle Pletka: It was funny. I saw that Al Sharpton, the Reverend Al, said on TV, "Defund the police? That's the kind of thing that people in the Hamptons say." And that's exactly right. The Democratic Party has become a bunch of Upper West Side liberals who don't understand not just how people live in impoverished areas and how people work in impoverished areas, but who have these radical solutions that are utterly divorced from the future prosperity and well-being of the United States.

Marc Thiessen: No doubt. And so what makes our system work is that we have a system of checks and balances, right? That there is no complete power in the hands of one party in most situations, because most elections end up leaving some protections for the minority. Let me walk you through a nightmare scenario, which is what I'm worried about, right? So Joe Biden, member of the Senate for decades, believer in the institution, campaigned during the Democratic primary by opposing those on the left who want to get rid of the legislative filibuster. So the filibuster means, for people who don't follow the intricacies of the Senate, that you need 60 votes to get anything done in the Senate.

Marc Thiessen: The Senate is supposed to be a check on the more populous branch, which is the House, right? And so the Democrats got rid of the filibuster for judges and executive appointments under Harry Reid. And then when Republicans came in they added the Supreme Court to that. So there's no filibuster for any kind of executive appointments. But there is a filibuster for legislation. Now Biden has flip flopped. And he has said that he would be open to getting rid of the filibuster for legislation as well. When the Democrats during their convention said that democracy is on the ballot, you're damn right it's on the ballot because that is a fundamental change to the way our government functions that would eliminate all opposition. Anything that the most radical elements that the Democratic Party want to do.

Danielle Pletka: Right. And people need to understand what that means, because you may think that it means, oh, a Green New Deal, or better adherence to the Paris Climate Accords or a more open approach to Iran. No, no, no, no, no, no, no. Those things are all completely within the realm of normal. What we're talking about is making the District of Columbia a state. We're talking about increasing the size of the Supreme Court beyond nine to as many as they want and then appointing all of those judges, court packing. Those are the things that terrify me. Those are the things that worry me, because if those things are done, they cannot be undone. And that sort of effort to usher in a dictatorship of the left-

Marc Thiessen: And that's not too strong a word.

Danielle Pletka: No, no, no. I used it with purpose. To usher in a dictatorship of the left, I think, is

scary. But, anyway, the election feels like it's tomorrow, but it's still a couple of months away. And in the meantime we really have to weigh these choices and recognize that we're not choosing between the fairy godmother and the Wicked Witch of the West. We've got hard choices.

Marc Thiessen: If you think about this, Bernie Sanders in his campaign proposed a hundred trillion dollars in spending over 10 years, which is incredible. Kamala Harris, when her campaign proposed about \$44 trillion in spending. Joe Biden, my friend Brian Riedl just calculated all of Biden's spending proposals \$11 trillion, which is the most that any nominee for a major party has ever proposed in spending. \$11 trillion is a huge ... And it's like, because of COVID, we don't think T in trillion is that big anymore because we've gotten used to passing these trillion-dollar bills. \$11 trillion is outrageous.

Marc Thiessen: So 11 trillion is the floor, 100 trillion is the ceiling. They're going to come out somewhere in the middle of that.

Danielle Pletka: If they have a Democratic Senate and House.

Marc Thiessen: But not just a Democratic Senate. If Joe Biden wins, there will be a Democratic Senate. They will have a Democratic House. I can't see a situation where Biden wins and Republicans win the Senate because structurally the Republicans are defending more seats. The only check will be the Republican minority and the ability to filibuster legislation. If they get rid of that, they literally have unchecked power.

Marc Thiessen: Go back. Think about the only time in recent history where we've had that kind of unchecked power was the first nine months of Obama's first term because they had a 60-vote majority in the Senate. Then Ted Kennedy died and Scott Brown got elected, and so they lost their 60-vote majority. Imagine, they will have that kind of unchecked power, not for nine months, but for four years. At least two years, because there probably would be a backlash against it. They are going to use that window to ram through everything, the most radical elements of their agenda, because they know that at some point there'll be a backlash of the voters and they'll lose the absolute control, and they might lose control of the Senate, and then they'll be at a stalemate.

Marc Thiessen: They're going to do all the things you said. They're going to pack the Supreme Court. Obviously, Ginsburg and Stevens will retire, and so they'll get two Supreme Court picks, but that doesn't change the construct of the Supreme Court at all. Are they going to be willing to go into the 2022 midterm elections without having changed the actual ideological balance of the Supreme Court? Not a chance.

Marc Thiessen: They're going to pass the Green New Deal. They're going to pass Medicare for All with a fig leaf that allows some private insurance so that Biden can say it really wasn't Medicare for All. They're going to pass all this radical agenda, and literally there will be no check on their power.

Danielle Pletka: You've almost convinced me.

- Marc Thiessen: Good.
- Danielle Pletka: For those of you who know me, that's a BFD, let me tell you.
- Danielle Pletka: We have a wonderful guest for our return debut. Ruth Wisse is the Martin Peretz Professor of Yiddish Literature and Professor of Comparative Literature at Harvard University emeritus. She's a noted scholar. She's an historian. She's just a bright and a wonderful woman. She received the National Medal of Arts and Humanities from George W. Bush, and I was simply delighted that she got that recognition. The proximate cause for us inviting her on was [this really cool piece](#) that she had in the Wall Street Journal, and we're going to talk to her a little about that.
- Marc Thiessen: The headline was "Vote for the Czar, It's Important." If that doesn't catch your attention, I don't know what does.
- Danielle Pletka: We'll let her explain why it was she advocated a vote for the czar.
- Marc Thiessen: Ruth, welcome to the podcast.
- Ruth Wisse: Thanks very much.
- Marc Thiessen: Good. We're so happy to have you here. You had a fascinating piece in the Wall Street Journal titled "Vote for the Czar, It's Important," which is a play on the Edwin Edwards line in the Louisiana governor's race, "Vote for the crook, it's important," but-
- Danielle Pletka: Equally applicable.
- Marc Thiessen: But you basically said-
- Ruth Wisse: Well, therein lies a tale, actually. As you can imagine, the headline was not my choice; it was the editor's, for exactly the reason that you say. They were sure that people would recognize it as you do, but a great many of my readers did not recognize this and they took it quite literally.
- Marc Thiessen: So you were not advocating czarism. Okay, good.
- Ruth Wisse: Yeah.
- Marc Thiessen: What you were arguing is about voting for the lesser of two evils, and you cited a story about — you learned this lesson on your first trip to Poland in 1978. Can you tell us a little bit about that?
- Ruth Wisse: Sure. Well, it's as I describe in this piece. I went to Poland in 1978 for the first time. My parents had come from Poland, and for me it was a visit, you see, to the land of the once living and now dead. I was prepared to visit the death camps and the cemeteries, but the woman who showed me around Warsaw actually wanted to tell me about something quite different. She wanted to tell me about her experience.

- Ruth Wisse: She told me that she had been a Communist as a young girl when she was a student, and she became so radicalized by her teacher in Vilna that she decided that when he went to the Soviet Union in order to be part of that great Soviet experiment, she decided a couple of years later to follow him. And she was arrested as a Polish spy. This was quite typical. These young idealists crossed the border in order to be part of the Soviet Union, but the Soviet Union was afraid that they would spread the news about what Poland was really like, what capitalist Poland was like, that it was better, and so many of them were arrested and sent to camps and the gulag. When she got to one of these camps, she was horrified to find the teacher who had radicalized her there before her. He had already tried to commit suicide once. He didn't want to speak very much about it, but the one thing he said to her was, "It was better under the czars."
- Danielle Pletka: That's really the point you try to lay out with this analogy, is that it's not always a choice between good and evil, between black and white. Sometimes it's a choice between bad and worse, or terrible and awful. Take this that step further, though, because I think you're using, obviously, the analogy to apply to this election. Polls tell us, at least, that when the American people consider the character of Donald Trump and the character of Joe Biden, they don't have much doubt about who's worse. It's Donald Trump.
- Ruth Wisse: Yeah. Well, this is true. The piece, perhaps, was too subtle in that respect. When you're using an analogy, as you can understand, people will take it in whatever direction they understand it to go or they misunderstand it to go. But you're quite right.
- Ruth Wisse: This incident came to mind, actually, in 2016, during the primaries. We hang out with a lot of Republicans, a lot of Conservatives. Everyone was talking about who was going to be the nominee, and among the people that we knew, nobody thought that Trump would be the nominee, and he wouldn't have been anyone's nomination for the presidency. But then there he was. He was the candidate.
- Ruth Wisse: That's when this incident very much occurred to me, and it's been on my mind ever since. Because here was a situation where you would have wanted to have a candidate whom you could support wholeheartedly and whom you could believe and in whose character you could trust. And Trump was imperfect, clearly imperfect. But it was so clear that of the two sides that you were voting for, and this is the point that I was trying to make, it's not just the individual, especially in this case. It is the system that you're talking about. It's the country. It's the trend of politics that you're talking about.
- Ruth Wisse: And here the choice really seemed to me to be very close to what my guide had tried to impress upon me, namely that sometimes you don't have a good choice. Sometimes you don't have the choice between the better and best; you do have the choice between bad and far worse. I think that this is an analogous situation, where, whatever one thinks of the president, he is not the perfect leader of the conservative movement, he's not the perfect leader of the Republican Party, but he is the person who represents, as he puts it, Make America Great Again. He stands for many things that one does support wholeheartedly. And on the other side, I think that you have forces which seem to me to be far more dangerous and developed than they were four years ago.



- Marc Thiessen: Well, that's the second lesson you learned, was that far worse than czarism was the socialist road to totalitarian hell. That's basically the president's argument for reelection, is that the Democrats are going to put us on the socialist road to totalitarian hell. I don't know about the totalitarian part, but they certainly seem to intend to put us on the road to socialism.
- Ruth Wisse: Yes. Well, totalitarian in this sense. It's interesting that when you say you're a democratic socialist, what does that really mean? It seems to me that in historical experience that we have, what it means is "We'll use democracy in order to vote in socialism, but then there's not the slightest suggestion that socialism will ever allow itself to be voted out." In that sense, I think the road to totalitarianism or to a one-party system and to repression that comes with it, seems to me to be pretty implicit.
- Marc Thiessen: Well, it's interesting because one of the things that Joe Biden has flip-flopped on has been getting rid of the legislative filibuster. So he was saying that because he's been a senator for so long, he loves the institution, that during the primaries, he would not get rid of the legislative filibuster, but then he flip flopped about a month ago and said, "Well, it depends on how obstreperous the Republicans are being." So if Democrats win control of the House, the Senate and the White House, the only check on one party power in Washington will be the Republican minority in the Senate. And they've said they're going to get rid of it.
- Ruth Wisse: Yes. Well, that's exactly the process. And people today, when you use the word communist, they think that you are a Neanderthal because they immediately think of Joe McCarthy and they think of the abuses of being anti-communist. But the truth is, I grew up still among many communists and I know how they think. I know what their thinking is. And these are not people who are given to the democratic process in the sense that they don't for one minute believe that communism or that socialism, when it's institutionalized, is reversible. So if one thinks of the freedom that we enjoy of a vigorous two party system and the real tension that should exist in any healthy democracy between liberal forces on one hand and conservative forces on the other, and ideally you would have a really good balance between these two. Well, then, in good conscience, you cannot vote in a socialist-tending party.
- Danielle Pletka: It's interesting. I think that your emphasis on the subtlety of your analogy is very apt. And, obviously, in any instance, people are going to adapt it to their worldview. If that was the way it was, it's 10 times more so today that you see people basically acting on their confirmation bias at all times. But you raise in my mind this interesting and still very subtle point, which is that when you vote for Donald Trump, you know what you're getting. You see what you're getting. We can say many bad things about Donald Trump, and he is not our dream candidate by any standard. But the one thing you can't say is that in voting for Donald Trump, you're going to end up getting something different than Donald Trump.
- Danielle Pletka: I think the obverse is what concerns me so much, which is the myth versus the reality. It's the Soviet Union's myth versus the Soviet Union's reality. It is what Max Erik discovered in the gulag. What he thought was a paradise was, in fact, a prison. And that's what I worry about a little bit with Biden is that he is not "What

you see is what you get." He is a figurehead for a party that is trending in this very wrong direction. Is that an apt way to think about it?

Ruth Wisse: Yes, pretty much. This is exactly the point and it's exactly why I put in these lines of that when Erik said that it was not an endorsement of czarism. Very far from it. One is in a bind when one cannot wholeheartedly and full-throatedly, you see, say, "I am for. I endorse." And so forth. And when the other side doesn't even allow you to raise any qualms. So the situation of voters, conservative voters and Republican voters has been quite difficult. And I wrote it, really, out of a sense of this difficulty. It's been really widely misunderstood. And, by the way, one of the things that I'm trying to say here is that, keep your eye off Trump. Our eye should be on the other side. That's whom one should be investigating.

Ruth Wisse: The idea is not how good or bad Trump is. We know what that is completely, as you say. But what one has to focus on and what one has to ask the difficult questions is precisely where the press and the media are not asking the questions. One has to push to find out how bad that is going to be, whether one can have any faith in it at all. One of my friends calls Trump, "The president in the altogether." And I think that this is a wonderful description. When you think of that famous story about the king who wore no real clothes because his tailors had talked him into the fact that they were sewing these elaborate garments for him. And in truth, they sent him out completely naked. And no one had the guts to say, "The king is naked," except for this little child who says, "The king is naked." Well, we all know that story, but here you have a president who is there in the altogether. He's the one who draws attention to his flaws. You don't need anyone to do it for you.

Danielle Pletka: Ain't that the truth.

Ruth Wisse: And talk about transparency. It is an amazing phenomenon. And, for some of us who are so chastised by the cancel culture, to have someone who draws all this attention to themselves and to their own imperfections is really quite stunning. But at the same time, I think one ought to draw the attention to the imperfections on the other side.

Marc Thiessen: So last question for me, our friend Anne Applebaum had a piece in *The Atlantic* that drew the exact opposite analogy of what you've done, which is that she compared Republicans who were supporting Trump to Soviet collaborators who went and collaborated with the communist regime and drew a comparison between people who joined the resistance to communism and those who collaborated in their psychology. What do you think of that analogy?

Ruth Wisse: Yes. Well, as you can imagine, I have heard this directed against me pretty often as well. I think she's totally wrong. I don't want to psychoanalyze this, but I think that she actually draws it from a Polish perspective. And I don't know what she's thinking. I understand perfectly people who are afraid of how Trump governs and many things about him. I can genuinely understand some people's qualms. But what I cannot understand is the idea that he has anything to do with fascism or even authoritarianism. It's just not the way he's governing.

Ruth Wisse: If one looks at this person, you have to be a serious student of psychology. You



have to understand whom you're dealing with here, and his flaws have nothing to do with trying to impose fascism or authoritarianism. One worries, is he going to be consistent enough? Is he going to be strong enough? One worries precisely about opposite tendencies in him. So, there, you see, I think that people go very wrong when they try to exaggerate his evil and when they misconstrue the problem. That makes it impossible to have a decent and healthy discussion, even among people who normally are sophisticated political thinkers.

Danielle Pletka: So, this is my exit question. We have talked an awful lot in this podcast about history. You are a professor of literature and of Jewish history. And Marc and I so often come back to this. How much of the mindless discussion around socialism and fascism, do you put down to the ahistorical nature of... I'm trying not to say young people, because I don't want to sound like an old fart, and I don't think it's entirely true. But America seems to have turned into a country full of people that have no collective memory of what socialism was or what communism was or what fascism was. It is as if somehow these analogies in our own body politic are apt when they are completely absurd.

Ruth Wisse: Yes. Well, I think that you're right. I think the problem goes even beyond that. But I spent 21 years at Harvard, and even when I got in and was planning my first course, I didn't have much historical background. I wanted to get right into the literary analysis. And I was told that half the students who were coming in did not have a history course beyond grade nine. So that was coming in. But then, Harvard itself, during those 21 years, really became weaker and weaker and weaker in teaching anything about American history, civics, anything that I would call the reinforcement of democracy. And I got up more than once at faculty meetings and I said, "Listen, democracy is not biologically transmitted. You have got to teach these things." Well, it's not being done at the universities. It's not being done. It's not taken seriously. And I think that you are perfectly right to emphasize this. I think that this is the key from grade kindergarten on, that one has to be told how precious what we have really is. How unique it is and how precious it is and how much has to go into reinforcing the texts and the history and the teachings. But this has to start from scratch now from kindergarten and everything has to begin from there all the way up to university. It's been completely pushed aside.

Danielle Pletka: Well, that's a depressing and yet apt note on which to end this marvelous conversation. Thank you for the piece you wrote. Thank you for your patience with our technical woes. And thank you for joining me and Marc. We're honored to have you.

Ruth Wisse: You're very kind. Thanks, I appreciate your work very much.

Marc Thiessen: All right, Dany, are you voting for the czar?

Danielle Pletka: Well I'm thinking about it more than I ever thought I might. And that to me is shocking. Because I don't buy the "mute button presidency" and I do worry a lot about a second Trump term and what he would do. I really do, I think there are a lot of dumb things that Trump hasn't done yet. I worry about NATO. I don't worry as much about our alliances, but I worry about NATO. I worry about our

troop presences that are keeping the peace in places like Iraq and Afghanistan.

Marc Thiessen: You think Biden's not going to get rid of those?

Danielle Pletka: Yeah. Well, I think there's no risk of Biden backing out of NATO, that's for sure.

Danielle Pletka: But yes, on everything else, I think that's absolutely true. Look, this is a hard one. And, what I constantly boggle at is what I ended our conversation with Ruth about, which is this ahistorical nature of the American body politic and our thinking public. What makes you think that Trump is a unique danger to democracy? That's garbage. What makes you think that we are really democratic backsliders? Really, you could analogize people who go into the Trump administration to Soviet collaborators or to Nazi collaborators? This is the kind of language that we see, and I'm so offended by it. And that's the other thing that's radicalizing me is this over the top language about who the people are and what our choices are.

Marc Thiessen: I agree with you a hundred percent. You raise the issue of fascism and socialism. The difference is that I don't know any Republicans who are advocating fascism, but there's a lot of Democrats advocating socialism, real socialism. Medicare for All is socialism. The Green New Deal is socialism. And again, you and I spent many years working in the Senate, we love the institution. We appreciate it for the block it is on the populist instincts of the House. If you look at what's happened with judges, which terrifies people on the left. The fact that when we got rid of the judicial filibuster, Trump has appointed 200 judges.

Marc Thiessen: It's been an absolute juggernaut of judge confirmations, completely transformed the judiciary. Imagine that same kind of juggernaut on the legislation front with Elizabeth Warren-

Danielle Pletka: Taxes.

Marc Thiessen: Taxes. It's taxes, climate, energy, immigration, state and local bailouts, permanent unemployment supplements, universal basic income, and just name the list of the things that they have proposed. Again, Joe Biden has proposed \$11 trillion in spending, which is more than any other candidate. And that's just the floor because his party wants more. They will transform this country in four years in ways that we will never be able to reverse, because government is a one way ratchet. Once you create a new program, once you create a new entitlement, it never gets taken away. And they will transform it in two to four years in ways that are unprecedented. The irony is that they're saying that Donald Trump is a threat to democracy. No, creating a situation where there's literally no check on power is a threat to democracy. Getting rid of the legislative filibuster is a threat to democracy. And I think that — the stakes in this election are higher than any I can think of in my lifetime.

Danielle Pletka: But what I don't understand is why we're left with these choices. What I don't understand is why is it that the public thinks that everything is so great that we can fiddle with the future of our nation? And that things will just be the same. You'll still have jobs. We'll still have foreign policy. We'll still have a military. We'll still be the arbiter of good values and good governance around the world. What

makes them think that that's the case? I don't understand.

Marc Thiessen: I don't think it's the public that's driving this. I think it's the ... as you were pointing out, the Democratic Party is run by its elites.

Marc Thiessen: So we had Angus Deaton on the podcast talking about the deaths of despair in Middle America and the working class. And I watched the Democratic Convention, there was zero effort. Most of those voters voted for Obama and Biden twice. And then they defected to Trump in 2016. There was no effort in the Democratic primaries to win those voters back at all. It was all targeted at liberal elites and minorities. And Angus Deaton, who we had on, he said, this is not just me saying it. "The Democratic Party has become a coalition of elites and minorities." And the Republican Party has become the party of the working class now, which has transformed it in ways that were some good, some we're a little bit uncomfortable with. So what you have is the elites of the Democratic Party — they used to have to try and appeal to the working class and the Reagan Democrats and the conservative Democrats, they had to moderate themselves.

Marc Thiessen: They don't feel that need anymore because that's not their base. And so we've gone into this base driven politics now. Where basically it used to be both parties would appeal to their base to get the nomination, and then tack to the center and try to win the people in the middle. Now it's all base turnout, generating votes. And so there's no incentive to try and moderate or move to the center, but the Democratic Party has gone so far to the left that I just fear that without any kind of check on their power, that the results can be disastrous.

Danielle Pletka: Well, that's a nice note on which to end. Things are really cheerful back here at the AEI studios. Anyway, we're still delighted to be back, notwithstanding the fun prospects of the coming months. Send us suggestions, send your complaints to Marc. We're delighted to be back and hope you are too. Take care.

Marc Thiessen: Thanks for listening.