

Justin: All right. Welcome back to another episode of Bush School Uncorked. You'll notice that our audio is a little different today. You will not hear the beautiful sounds of Downtown Uncorked in Historic Downtown Bryan and I got all that out, finally Greg, without you needing to help me.

Greg: Nope.

Justin: [inaudible 00:00:28].

Greg: No clinking glasses on this podcast. We are recording from our offices on the ... as Thanksgiving break approaches.

Justin: And we did want...there's been so much going on in the news and the Hot Takes earlier in the semester, it seemed to be well received. So there's a few things going on and Greg and I have been doing arguably a lot of deferring to our guests lately. So you're going to hear a lot from us today. And we have a couple of topics laid out for you. But before we get there, I just want to throw a couple of end of semester things out your way. We have two more live recordings at Downtown Uncorked in Historic Downtown Bryan. Those will be on December 3rd and our expected guest that evening is professor Kent Portney, who's a good friend of ours and has visited with us on the podcast before. So we're hoping to have him again.

Justin: And then on December 10th, we'll have Ambassador Larry Napper who will be joining us to talk about some more perspective to actually some of the topics we're going to be delving in today. Related to impeachment.

Greg: Well but I think Larry who was a former US ambassador to Latvia and Kazakhstan and an old Russia hand, I think he's going to talk more about Ukraine itself. I mean, what's the background? What was going on in Ukraine? How did Ukraine get involved in American domestic politics? But I think Larry wants to focus on his expertise, which is Ukraine and American foreign policy towards Ukraine. So it'll tangentially work into the impeachment thing, but when you and I think today are going to go right hot into the domestic politics.

Justin: It's been too long.

Greg: Yeah.

Justin: Hey, does Larry know Yovanovitch?

Greg: Yes. Knows her well.

Justin: So we'll just jump right in. Those are the two recordings we have coming up. Please come join us. We've had fun doing it with you live and in person. We'll take your questions there if you happen to be with us. So come around down the semester with us.

Greg: Holiday season at Downtown Uncorked.

Justin: Yes. And we'll be starting at 6:00 PM for both-

Greg: 6:00 PM.

Justin: Oh no, with Ambassador Napper we're doing one hour earlier.

Greg: We're going to go an hour earlier for Ambassador Napper because classes are done. 5:00 o'clock.

Justin: So 6:00 PM on the 3rd and 5:00 PM on the tenth

Greg: Yep.

Justin: That's enough. That's enough of front end stuff. Greg, what is going on? So I was a little bit out of touch last week following along some headlines and I was keeping up with the impeachment hearings. But as I was saying to you earlier, I hadn't watched any of the video and I took sometime today in preparation for today and watched some of the testimony, Fiona Hill's, Yovanovitch's, Vindman's and they paint a pretty damning picture. And these are career public servants. They're people who have been serving at the highest level of the government for, I mean in some of these people's cases, 30 plus years, which is Yovanovitch's case, served under Democrats and Republicans, highly celebrated in general, highly respected. And throughout the impeachment hearings I had a lot of damaging things to say about these kinds of back channel approaches that Rudy Giuliani at the direction of the president played in influencing things in Ukraine and holding up aid.

Justin: And there's all kinds of things for us to get into. But before we do that, the thing about this that's really stuck with me is these are career public servants mostly, people that we train at the Bush School and the President went to Twitter and against a number of these people essentially implicit threats and smear campaigns against career long public servants. And I mean, I don't know a ton of ambassadors. I know Ambassador Napper, but we both worked with Ambassador Crocker and I've known him for some time. And all I could kind of think about is him coming out and doing his job and say during Iraq and George W getting out there and just running a smear campaign against him and trying to run him out of town.

Justin: I mean, this stuff seems really wild and outside of the realm of anything that we've experienced. And so maybe you could give me a little bit of context for your takeaway just on this first part.

Greg: Yeah, I mean I wouldn't say it's unprecedented. Administrations have hung ambassadors out to dry in the past when they're looking for scapegoats. The episode that comes most directly to my mind is our hero, actually George H. W. Bush. After the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, there was an effort to kind of blame the US ambassador in Iraq for passing conflicting signals to Saddam Hussein. That's not why Saddam Hussein attacked Kuwait,

but, the Ambassador who was named April Glaspie was kind of hung out to dry by James A. Baker, III, the secretary of State. Who I mean I think James A. Baker, III is the greatest secretary of state really since Dean Acheson and General Marshall at the end of World War II. I mean this is a guy who got things done. But he was also elbows out political operator.

Greg: I do think the way the administration, the Trump Administration treated Ambassador Yovanovitch was a little different, in that they weren't blaming her for anything. They were saying that she ... well, they were blaming her for being anti-Trump. They weren't saying she didn't do her job right. They just kind of put out things that said, "Oh, she was bad news, bad things happened. The Ukrainians didn't like her," and in fact there was no crisis in US, Ukrainian relations. There was an effort by the Trump administration to leverage this foreign military aid into getting some political help from president Zelensky.

Greg: So, it's not like they were looking to offload responsibility on Yovanovitch. They were looking to kind of isolate and get rid of her so they could do these back channel things without any body...they hoped anybody blowing whistles on them. Well, whistles got blown. But it's interesting that you mentioned that you watched the testimony of the career people, Yovanovitch and Fiona Hill and the younger foreign service officer whose name I forget who testified as Fiona Hill, the one who was at the dinner table with Ambassador Sondland and when he got the call from president Trump, but he didn't watch Sondland, who I think might be the most important witness here because the Republican counter attack on Yovanovitch and Hill is that well you are never in the room with Trump. The president never spoke to you. You don't know exactly what the president was thinking when he did these things. But Sondland did talk to the president and he openly said that there was a quid pro quo.

Justin: His answer was yes [crosstalk 00:07:43].

Greg: Yes. He asked himself the question in his opening statement-

Justin: It's like you said and-

Greg: Was there a quid pro quo? Yes. Now. He said there was a quid pro quo for the white house call and a white house meeting. He didn't say there was a quid pro quo for the aid, but I know my read of all of this is that if you're a defender of the president, you're arguing two things that are contradictory and in the end you got to pick one, right? Some defenders of the president are arguing, well, the president had a perfect right to do this because Ukraine was incredibly corrupt and Joe Biden and his son are incredibly corrupt and we had to look into corruption in order to make sure that our aid was being used in a proper way. That's a tough one in that the only thing that the president seemed to care about was the Biden's, not other corruption.

Justin: And why go around your own diplomats and your state department, if that's....?

Greg: Right. Exactly. Then the other argument is these diplomats like Sondland and Rudy Giuliani, well, these not ... well Sondland's a diplomat, but has nothing to do with Ukraine. He was ambassador to the EU. Ukraine is not a member of the EU, but he was a confidant and personal contact to the president and the president basically said, "You'll take this over with Volcker and Governor Perry, you're the three Amigos and you deal with Rudy Giuliani and get this thing done with Ukraine."

Greg: So Sondland was the one who actually had conversations with the president and he's the one who said "Quid pro quo." Now the second line of defense is these guys were rogues, Giuliani and Sondland and Perry and Volcker, they were off on their own. I think that's a hard case to make. But since we were not going to get testimony from Mick Mulvaney or John Bolton or secretary Pompeo, we're not going to get people who may be, are willing to say, "I spoke directly to the president and he said, yeah, let's get that dirt on Biden. Let's get that CrowdStrike stuff."

Greg: But if you look at the memorandum of the conversation with Zelensky, it's all in there. The president asking him about CrowdStrike, the president asking him about Biden. So I think that right now the defenders of the president are throwing everything they can have against the wall and seeing what's next.

Justin: Yeah. One of the things that stuck with me too, they don't strike me as arguments. So some of this it was hard for me to watch. I mean I have to check in and out sometimes a lot of news consumption and so, I just watched highlights, not commentary in preparation today and Nunes seems to kind of be trying to lead the counter attack at least in the impeachment hearings. He does such a bad job, if you're trying to have like a rational argument, right? If you're trying to say, "Here's our laid out defense, here's why, the presidents, these things are untrue about him," and he doesn't even try to do that. At least in what I've seen it's more of this is just a circus because we know it's a circus and it's a circus.

Greg: It's a circus because it's a circus.

Justin: Yes it's a circus. Right, and then the thing that's breaking today I guess was that one of Giuliani's associates who's been under arrest is willing to testify that Nunes is kind of part of it as well. Was going to go deep to look at that.

Greg: He had a meeting with one of these Ukrainian prosecutors who was involved in all of this. Who knows? I mean clearly the strategy on Republicans on the committee was not to try to convince, I think it wasn't to try to convince the undecideds. I'm not sure there are undecideds. Was to give talking points to those who want to support the president and I think that they were very successful at doing that. I mean I haven't seen any public opinion polls that show marked change in the public's view of impeachment and conviction.

Greg: It seems to me that people are pretty dug in. I think one of the differences between this investigation and the Nixon investigation, which led not to an impeachment but to the resignation of the president in the face of what would have been impeachment and

conviction. I think one of the differences, we had the smoking gun at the beginning, we had the transcript of the, not the transcript, but the memorandum of the call, in the Nixon case it built and built, and then you had the tape where the president was on the tape basically saying, "Let's do this." Right. In terms of the Watergate breaking....

Greg: We had that at the beginning and now it's all somewhat anti-climactic. I don't know, maybe John Bolton will spill, but he doesn't seem like it. He seems like he's more interested in reaping that \$2 million advance for the book he's going to write about, this misadventures in the Trump administration. But I'm not sure. I think that if you were disposed to think that what the president did was wrong vis-a-vis Ukraine, you saw these hearings and you said, "Yep, now I know it was wrong." And I think if you were disposed to say, "Well they don't really have anything solid on the president," you would have said, "Well it's a bunch of hearsay and all these people..."

Greg: But after a while the people on the ground, the people doing the diplomacy that people who are hearing the phone calls, if they all think that it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it's probably a duck.

Justin: Yeah. So I've had the same response to that as you have, which is, I've kind of followed along some polls and if anything, independence from polls I've seen lately are breaking more against impeachment in favor of it. But, I mean when you and I were just kind of talking about it as we were getting ready to talk about this is, it feels like to me sometimes I'm in an alternate reality, right? I'm watching testimony from leading ambassadors and leading people within our own government who were career public servants painting this whether, even quid pro quo proven or not, you just listen to their stories about kind of how this point out and the stuff that's not even disputed from the Republicans, And it's terrifying and it's behavior that's certainly un-presidential and ... but really makes you question kind of where are the loyalties lie in these situations.

Justin: Because one of the things Fiona Hill said, right, which was like, "Who benefits, from the situation." And how horrible is it that foreign influences and private interests were able to essentially sack an ambassador whose mission was anti-corruption in Ukraine. And that feels like a pretty serious hold on decision making. And then when you're kind of watching Nunes kind of making the circus himself right there right next to Schiff, it feels like there was a strong foothold in the kind of the decision making process for which way the state goes, that these influences are super pervasive. Like it's not at the edges that it's, super pervasive in how the Trump administration does business.

Greg: So I mean I think the Trump administration does business in all sorts of ways that are highly irregular and ... but I don't want to focus too much on him using kind of special envoys and secret, lots of presidents have done that. It's the purpose for which it's being used. Right? Henry Kissinger didn't inform the state department before he went to China on that secret trip. He took great pains to keep it secret from everybody in the government. But he was doing it at the president's behest to further a national security interest. Whether you agree or disagree, and opening to China was a national security interest. It wasn't about getting dirt on George McGovern or Edmund Muskie for the 1972 election.

Greg: And that seems to me to be the core difference here is not the fact that the president went outside the normal channels on a foreign policy issue. Sometimes presidents do that, but what was the purpose for which it was done. And it's very hard for me to look at the accumulation of the evidence and say that this was done because of a general American foreign policy worry about corruption in Ukraine. This was done in order to try to extract personal political advantage for the president directly going against stated American policy of supporting the Ukrainian government in its war with the Russian intervention in Ukraine.

Justin: Well another piece that's come out of this that I believe it was Fiona Hill addressed, but is also the shifting of the blame of intervention in US elections at the end, all reports and from our own intelligence community and from international kind of watch organizations, I mean the evidence is kind of written on the wall, but that Russia had attempted to interfere in the US elections. This isn't kind of disputed that has done this in Ukraine, has done this in lots of places in the world....

Greg: They did it in great Britain on the Brexit referendum.

Justin: And then sort of one of the narratives coming out of the Republican party was, "Oh no, it's Ukraine," straight out of kind of Republican, that's straight out of Russian intelligence service agencies, spreading fabrications to get the Republican Party to say them out loud and during the impeachment hearings.

Greg: Absolutely. And I thought that was one of Fiona Hill's best points is that when you as a member of Congress talk about Ukraine, Ukrainian intervention in the 2016 election, you are parroting Russian talking points. Even people within the administration told the president his own Homeland security advisor in the white house, former Homeland security. Well, we know why he is former now. Former Homeland security advisor in the white house said, "Sir, this is a fabrication. There is no evidence that Ukraine was involved in any of this stuff. The server, the emails, any of it," and yet it has been adopted as a talking point for domestic political purposes and that, that might be the most dispiriting thing. Not just that the president does it, but there's so many members of Congress are willing to do it even though their own committees. All right. The Senate intelligence committee, even the house intelligence committee came out with reports that said Russia intervened in the 2016 election.

Greg: Now Nunes from the chair said, "Well of course. Yes. Just because we say Russia intervened, that doesn't mean Ukraine didn't" But it's a reach....

Justin: So I can go on and on on this. Let's zoom out and talk about kind of the politics of it.

Greg: Right. The bottom line here is that unless something dramatically different happens, there's not going to be 67 votes in the Senate to convict the president. Right? I would be amazed if five Republicans voted to convict on any article, right? Maybe Mitt Romney, maybe Susan Collins because she's in a tough reelection. Maybe Cory Gardner from Colorado because he's in a tough re-election. And then, I don't know, Ben Sasse or maybe somebody like Lamar Alexander who's retiring, but nobody's giving any

indication. I'd be amazed if as many as five voted to convict on any article and it's probably going to be, if any, one or two.

Greg: So, we go to 2020 and then the question is, does this either the president being impeached but acquitted, does this help him politically or hurt him politically? Bill Clinton impeached, acquitted in 1998 with quite a few Republican votes coming over. Right? On one of the counts, five Republicans voted to acquit on another of the accounts the counts against Bill Clinton, ten Republicans voted to acquit. And so I don't think there was a majority for conviction on either of those. Not, even talking about two thirds, I don't think there was a simple majority.

Greg: It helped Bill Clinton. It helped Republicans in the 1998 Congressional elections. So we're in uncharted territory. This is the first time a president has ever been impeached, who then has run for re-election. And my guess is that Democrats think that this will mobilize their base. I don't think the president's base needs to be mobilized. It's already mobilized and we'll see who gets their people to the polls.

Justin: Yeah, I think that's, we've done, you and I have now had this conversation I think even publicly, once or twice. And I think I share your, I guess realism. I want to say pessimism, but it doesn't feel like pessimism. But I think I sort of still imagine that the house will pass a couple of resolutions and you have a couple of defectors. So I mean that'll be, he'll be impeached and then he'll have a couple of defectors in the Senate, but it is really hard to imagine any circumstance under which you get 67 senators. And so it'll be interesting to see what it does for the election I think, which I think will take us nicely into our next point and then we can come back to impeachment if we, want to end on some rosy topics.

Justin: But we've had two new democratic candidates come out recently. There's been some shifting around in the polls as well. I wanted to start by you and I were discussing this, we mentioned that there were a couple of late entrants and one of them ... let's see if I can, I had a fun article pulled up on it and now I think I let it go. But one of the new, Democratic candidates, Patrick, held an event at Morehouse, did you see this?

Greg: No.

Justin: He had an event at Morehouse and announced about ... He was going to hold an announcement at Morehouse, whereas the other candidates were having, I think maybe it was when the debate was going on.

Greg: The debate this week.

Justin: And only two people showed in the audience.

Greg: [inaudible 00:24:04].

Justin: They canceled the event because only two people showed up.

Greg: Well, I mean Deval Patrick is, he was a successful governor of Massachusetts, African-American candidate. You could see why he would want to try to go to Morehouse and draw a crowd. But I think the bottom line for both him and Mike Bloomberg, Michael Bloomberg, is you got to start earlier and earlier in these campaigns and getting in two months before the Iowa caucuses is just not going to get it done.

Justin: Yeah, it seems like it's too late in the narrative.

Greg: I mean exactly. And people have started to pick and obviously they both thought Biden was going to collapse. Everybody thinks Biden's going to collapse, but he's come back to the pack, but he hasn't collapsed. So I don't know Deval Patrick ... So Michael Bloomberg's theory is, I don't have to do Iowa. I don't have to do New Hampshire. I'll come in at Super Tuesday. I don't even think he's going to do South Carolina and Nevada. Right?

Greg: He'll come in on Super Tuesday and then he'll try to use Nationwide Advertising to win. But look, I don't dislike Michael Bloomberg, I think he would be a fine president. And if he gets a nomination, I'm certainly going to vote for him rather than president Trump. But we know that the candidate with the most money doesn't always win the election. If that were the case, right? It would've been president Hillary Clinton, right. At defeating Governor Jeb Bush who would've gotten the Republican nomination last time cause he had the most money at the outset. So it's hard for me to see Bloomberg's path to victory.

Justin: Maybe at some ... he might, could be a reasonable VP choice as like a...?[Inaudible 00:26:14].

Greg: Michael Bloomberg is not going to be anybody's vice president.

Justin: That's fair enough.

Greg: This is one of the ten richest men in the world.

Justin: Good point.

Greg: He's not going to be anybody's vice president. Deval Patrick could be somebody's vice president. Although why would you pick a guy from Massachusetts which is the most reliably Democratic State or one of the most reliably Democratic States. But no, Michael Bloomberg isn't going to be anybody's vice president. You can ... I'll bet all of Bloomberg's money on that. He is worth 50 billion dollars.

Justin: It's about as likely as Trump ever having been a VP.

Greg: It's about as likely as Trump having 50 billion dollars.

Justin: Well, so I think that leaves us with four kind of candidates leading the pack, at least currently at least. I mean, we'll see if Bloomberg is able to break through in the top four

and maybe he will and there hasn't been enough time really to determine that, but it looks like there's four leading the pack. We have Biden and we have Warren and we have Buttigieg. And we have, who's that? Bernie Sanders.

Greg: Bernie Sanders.

Justin: So one thing that this suggests to me is that this primary thing might go on a little ways, because when you look at the polls, nobody's coming in more than about 25%, 30% these days. So, before we talk about which candidate, I mean this could be really ugly and if you're hoping that the Democrats can put together kind of a unified front to go against Trump, then a long, bloody primary season's not what you're hoping for. And given the different kind of visions for America that are coming up, some of these campaigns, it's hard to imagine that they might just, turn over, it's hard to imagine that Bernie Sanders is going to throw his support behind Joe Biden early in this process. Right? It just doesn't seem like a likely outcome. So I think this is going to get drawn out and bloody and ugly.

Greg: It's going to, it's going to be ugly, but I don't know if it's going to be drawn out. I think that there's a natural process of whittling down in those early states. And what looks like a huge ... we just have to think back to 2016 how many Republicans were there? 16 at one point running? They got whittled down real quick to Ted Cruz and John Kasich and Donald Trump. And it was pretty clear Donald Trump was going to win pretty early, it seemed to me and ... so I'm going to discount Michael Bloomberg. He's the only wild card in this race as far as I can tell. But a 77 year old billionaire just doesn't seem to catch the zeitgeists of the democratic party these days.

Justin: Not at this moment in time anyways...

Greg: So I just don't ... again, this is no knock on Michael Bloomberg who I think is really smart, did a fine job as mayor of New York. You can argue about some of the things he did, but he ran the city well, the city is bigger than any I think ten or twelve states in terms of its population and I think he'd be a good president, but I just don't think that he's going to get the nomination of the Democratic party.

Greg: So, take the top four, maybe Amy Klobuchar if she does well in Iowa, but I don't see her having that many legs. They all have really serious negatives about them. And maybe this is just me being the pessimist, because I would like to see president Trump defeated at the polls, but Bernie Sanders, old, socialist, Medicare for all which polls horribly as we know. Add in the fact that he's Jewish, which I don't think ... it's not the impediment it would be to being elected president even 30 years ago, but I don't think it's going to be a help either.

Greg: Elizabeth Warren, Medicare for all. I mean, I think that we saw some of her poll numbers come back after she put out her Medicare for all plan, and now she's tried to walk it back and say, "Well we'll do it in stages, blah blah blah." That kind of eats away at her..."I'm a truth teller...I've got a plan for that." And the misogyny of the amount of at least parts of the American electorate that we saw in 2016 run against her. I think

she's a very impressive person, but let's face it, in Massachusetts politics, she ran behind Hillary Clinton, right? Her 2018 performance in her re-election campaign for the Senate did less well in terms of percentage of votes than Hillary Clinton did in Massachusetts.

Greg: So when was the last time a New England liberal got elected president? Do you know? It was before you were born.

Justin: Definitely before I was born.

Greg: It was John F Kennedy. I was born, I was two years old. And guess what, he ran to the right of Nixon on all sorts of issues, particularly foreign policy. We've had New England liberals nominated and running in primary since then, and none of them have done well. Just ask Michael Dukakis and John Kerry, president Dukakis, remember him? No, because he was not president. Of course, we should be happy about that because our hero, George H. W. Bush defeated him for the presidency. But so that's what Warren has the New England liberal problem.

Greg: Pete Buttigieg, 37 years old. The only public office he's held is mayor of South Bend, Indiana. Clearly does not excite at least so far, one of the major constituencies of their Democratic Party, which is African American voters. It was unenthusiastic turnout in the African American community that one can argue cost Hillary Clinton, Michigan, and Pennsylvania. Right? If she had been able to turn out African-Americans in the same percentages as Barack Obama, they voted for her, but they just didn't turn out in numbers and you can understand why she would have trouble exciting and African-American base as much as Barack Obama did.

Greg: But still, Pete Buttigieg doesn't seem to be somebody who has those connections. And of course he has his own problems in South Bend with the policing incidents in the African-American community. And I don't know if you've read this in the papers, but he's gay and, again, the fact that he's a major part of these, that he's a serious major party candidate for president shows that American public opinion has changed on the issue of sexual orientation. But it has it changed so much that a gay man could get elected president? I don't know. Now I wasn't sure a black man could get elected president and Barack Obama got elected. So maybe I'm underselling the American public, but I worry about that.

Greg: And then Joe Biden, and I'll stop filibustering after this.

Justin: Go ahead, I want to hear your analysis then I can respond.

Greg: I grew up with Joe Biden, believe it or not, I grew up in Delaware. I remember Joe Biden's first campaign in 1972 he was elected to the Senate. It was miraculous that he won. He beat a guy who had never lost election in Delaware in the face of the Nixon landslide in 1972 he campaigned the hell out of this, he's a great retail campaign, but the presidency is not a retail campaign and he is in his, I forget whether he's 76 or 77 but he's old and he's lost a bit on his fast ball. There's just no question about that. And

God help me. I hope I'm in as good a shape as Joe Biden is when I'm 77 but I don't think that I'd be running for president of the United States and I just worry about it.

Greg: He's run twice when he was more energetic and younger and crashed and burned both times. So I worry, on the other hand, once some of these people start winning primaries, they're going to look a lot better. They're going to look a lot stronger. Other people are going to come to them. At some point, Warren and Bernie are going to, one of the two is going to drop and the other one's going to get the support. I hope. I think and I hope.

Greg: Bernie's really stubborn. We saw that in 2016 but if he loses Iowa and New Hampshire to Warren, I think he's got to think about what he's doing. So this is all going to be really interesting. I think that the field will be winnowed by the time we get to Super Tuesday at ... I think there's only going to be three serious candidates. Don't ask me to guess who they are, but I think ... well, I'll tell you who I think they are.

Greg: I think there'll be Warren. I think there'll be Biden and I don't know if it's going to be Buttigieg or Bernie or some dark horse like Amy Klobuchar or Mike Bloomberg. I don't know, but I think that by the time we get to Super Tuesday, I think we'll be down to three candidates. Three serious candidates.

Justin: One thing that you said that, that made me think about kind of doing analysis this early in the stages leading up to the 2016 election, this far out, I think the conversation would revolve around Jeb Bush and his weaknesses and Marco Rubio up and coming and Trump's out there being kind of crazy....

Greg: What a way out.

Justin: And remember all the talk about his ceiling, his ceiling was going to be 10% and the ceiling was going to be 15%. One of them must only be 5% of the population.

Greg: Those are really weak ceilings. Probably like the ceilings in some Trump buildings.

Justin: I shared some of your concern. I mean I think, I have friends that are Buttigieg fans and I think he seems to appeal to a younger millennials and he's, I think he has a little bit of charisma. He's got a good face for being a president and a campaign....

Greg: Little young face.

Justin: He is young and youthful and has kind of worked for Macron. I mean he's a little younger than Macron, but that can kind of catch on I think can be like a generational thing. So I'm with you in that someone that's only been the mayor of a town in Indiana, South Bend, Indiana. I worry about, and I also worry about turnout among the group that supports the Democratic Party in the largest percentage numbers, which is a turnout from African-Americans. So, and I just worry about him not being prepared. I mean, it's just I ... so I worry about that with him and from an electability, I mean, going up against Trump as kind of a young kind of wearing his being a gay man and being open about

that would be really interesting to see how that would play out in an American discourse under Trump. I imagined it would be awful, but there's a chance that it would like strike a moment for people to take the high road.

Greg: When was the last time the Trump campaign took the high road?

Justin: Never.

Greg: Ask Ambassador Yovanovitch about that.

Justin: No kidding. And I agree with you about Warren. Warren hasn't had a lot of ton of executive experience. Her numbers, even in our own state underperformed Hillary Clinton, which is something you and I talked about, Medicare for all is kind of worrisome. I think she would be a reasonable president. I mean I think she's, I think she's a hard worker. She's super intelligent, very bright. And it could be a fresh way of approaching the presidency after some of the previous years. But I do think she has some bigger ability problems. And I think Medicare for all again doesn't poll well even to your point, I get a certain Bernie, which it's hard to imagine that the socialist can win. And Biden who's kind of older and seems to be missing a few steps along the way and this kind of have a little pep in his step and I don't ... there's all those kind of make me worry about how they'll go up against Trump.

Justin: But then on the other side, it wouldn't take too many things to change for him to I think look weak in the general public's opinion in some of these candidates. Start acting like reasonable humans on the campaign trail and seeing things that reminded us of corporate presidents and how nice that is to just not have the insanity and maybe that will win over a bunch of independents and tamper support for Trump-

Greg: Right. I mean, and the great unanswered question here, and I don't think anybody can know this. We can only know it after the fact. Is this going to be a base mobilization election or is this going to be a "shift the middle election," right. Shift those suburban, especially female suburban voters who might've voted Trump in 2016 right? And where you go on this depends on what theory of the case you have. If you think that what you have to do is mobilize the base, then you've won Sanders or Warren I think or an African-American candidate like Corey Booker or Kamala Harris.

Greg: If you want a mobile ... if you're looking to switch some of those voters in those swing States in the Midwest and in Pennsylvania, right? You take the strategy that the Democrats use to win congressional seats in these places in 2018 right? You run to the middle, you run moderates, you emphasize healthcare but not Medicare for all. You emphasize Obamacare and gradual expansion of Obamacare benefits and you basically say, "Let's get back to normal." And I don't know, I mean people are going to go on their gut on this, not because we have no evidence which of these either of those strategies could win, right? You mobilize African-Americans, you hold up the voters that Hillary had, you mobilize African-Americans more. You win right?

Greg: You hold the voters that Hillary had and you switch just a couple of percentages in the suburbs of Pennsylvania and Michigan and Wisconsin and you win. So I don't know which one will go. I mean, I think that the less risky strategy is the second one, but they're both risky.

Justin: Well, and I think, one of the ways what you painted that was sort of a return to normalcy as a choice. I think that's a nice kind of time.

Greg: Worked for Warren Harding.

Justin: Yeah. But what it made me think of was our next topic, which is worldwide protests and the chance of any return to our sort of a normalcy seems to be under just general threat throughout the world. I was spending some time, as I mentioned earlier, preparing for today. I started looking at some of the protests and as I mentioned earlier, I was a little kind of checked out from the news the last week and I'm taking some family time. And when you said there was something going on in Bolivia, I had just not been caught up with what was going on in Bolivia. And then as I started looking around, which wasn't in our previous interaction about the podcast, but there's also in Columbia now and so in the Americas, this is really what started kind of in Chile. And you hear very a little bit about this and sort of most outlets unless you do looking for it in the US but you hear a little bit about Santiago.

Justin: And then that was kind of it. And then like I said, I just found the headlines. I had not seen anything about Bolivia. I have not seen anything about Columbia over the last few days. And so-

Greg: And in the Americas you still have protest in Nicaragua.

Justin: Yeah. Which I didn't even know about. Right? And so this instability on our own continent is bad and worrisome. And then you have stuff going on in Hong Kong, which we've talked about and it's kind of been a little near and dear to my own heart, after spending the summer in Taiwan and having a brief stopover in Hong Kong right before the protest started. And knowing some Hong Kongers who are kind of experiencing this as it's playing out. So that one's kind of stuck with me and we've talked about it a few times. And the recent thing there is the elections went way in favor of the pro-democracy candidates. Something like 90% or it was like a crazy number.

Greg: This is of course for the relatively powerless local council elections.

Justin: Yeah. And so, and then you have things going on in Lebanon and Iraq and might be better for you to kind of step in and give some context for those. So yeah, maybe do that. Then let's talk about maybe there's some themes across some of these, because that's been some of the speculation as well.

Greg: I mean Lebanon, Iraq and Iran. So when one thinks of all of these things all together, one, immediately flashes back to 2011 where in the Arab world we had this contagion of protests, right? December of 2010 Tunisia, then Egypt and Syria and Yemen and Bahrain

and in Libya right? That became what at the time was optimistically called the Arab Spring.

Greg: I don't see, even within the Middle East itself, I don't see that kind of contagion. Right? Things are happening in Lebanon. Things are happening in Iraq and things are happening in Iran, but I don't see them as particularly connected in the sense that, "Oh, people in Iraq saw people in Lebanon demonstrating and they demonstrate." Right? There were, the unique triggers to each of these. Right?

Greg: In Lebanon it was they said they were going to put a tax on WhatsApp, the phone app. And in Iran it was a major increase in the price of gasoline at the pump 50% right? And in Iraq it was basically, I think, accusations of corruption that had been surfacing within the government not as explicit in economic spur as Lebanon and Iran, but what unites them with the Americas and Hong Kong. I couldn't even say that it's economics. Right? Because in Hong Kong seems to me that, that's a place that does okay economically, right? It seems that in Hong Kong it's political rights, that people are in the streets for, not economic, greater economic gains.

Greg: In Bolivia. Right? It was president Morales going beyond the two term limit, having changed the constitution and apparently having run up at least a questionable election, that was the thing that brought people in the streets.

Greg: In Chile, it seems to be more directly economic, but it seems like to some extent those, protests got taken over by more anarchist radical. I mean, when you go in and you trash the subway, you're not hurting rich people when you trash the subway. Right? And so I don't know if we can link them together in any kind of causal chain. Can we say this is the far echoes of the financial crisis of 2008 or 2009 I don't know. We're, 10 years out from that.

Greg: And so I don't see anything that needs some together except for the fact that with modern communications we see all of these in real time. And I don't know if what happens in, ... it's pretty, it's very clear in the Arab Spring that we know people went out on the streets in Egypt because of what they saw in Tunisia on Al Jazeera. We know that, they use the same slogans and likewise, we know that people went out in Syria and Yemen and Bahrain and Libya because of what they saw in Egypt on Al Jazeera.

Greg: And the timing was like, it didn't take months or it took days, maybe weeks. The slogans, as I said, were the same in many instances. But I don't see that in this kind of span of protests across the region except for maybe on the sense of greater global communications gives people the idea of, "Well, if they can do it in Santiago, why can't we do it in Hong Kong?" You're more into the modern communications stuff than I am. I had to have our trusty assistant Faith who helps us put on the podcast come and make sure that I could get into Zoom and-

Justin: You did it great great. You got right into Zoom. We only had to figure how to turn your microphone on-

Greg: There we go. But without Faith, I would've been here yelling going "Do you want me to be louder?" And nobody would've heard me.

Justin: So I have a few thoughts. So one of them ... I read up a good bit on the protest as well, because it's one of the things that's been popular kind of a prevalent stream of things being worried about as a millennial in our generation has been inequality. That's been one that kind of, I was kind of come up through the university with thinking about and so my gut for some of this was inequality. Because some of it is like government raising fees, but that's where doesn't catch all of it to your point. And then particularly the stuff in Bolivia and in Hong Kong, I don't think, I mean Hong Kong has pretty severe inequality actually, but it's not ... it doesn't seem to be really what they were ... What they seem to have been protesting about.

Justin: And Bolivia has been ... Bolivia I read a little bit into is really interesting because the protests seem to be because Morales was rude. So it's Morales supporters being angry that their leader had been removed from office for corruption.

Greg: But before that the anti Morales people were in the streets pushing for him to leave and that created the crisis that led the army to intervene and Morales to leave.

Justin: So what I think is kind of interesting about that is just that particular one and then zoom back. But this one stuck with me because of that narrative and thinking about what's going on in our own country with potential backlash to say impeachment and removal. And thinking about all the kind of mass protests had been or on kind of the left. There hasn't actually been that much in the US but there've been protests from the left sporadically. And then you could imagine if-

Greg: Right, the biggest mobilization was the Women's March. And I don't know if you want to call that the left, but it's a mobilization that's more about specific issues with women, some of which are undoubtedly are economic inequality and economic rights. But those weren't exactly front and center.

Justin: Yeah. So I think inequality like has to be an undercurrent theme, but maybe not a necessary and sufficient condition. So another thing that is-

Greg: But that can cut other ways too. Because if you look at Brexit, right? It seems that people who felt like they were left out, right? Were voting for Brexit. And that's usually considered the right wing position. But you're right, I think inequality is an underlying theme all....takes all over these days.

Justin: And I think the other one that I thought of and then I, there's one that I've read somewhere that I want to just share. One of them I think is interesting. One I think is kind of maybe not spot on, but it was just what I heard. So I think the human rights one though, if you broadly define human rights as economic and political opportunity and then you can kind of see people all over the world having those opportunities, there's political and economic opportunities and then you look at yourself and you have that social media and you have access to see these things playing out in the world. But what

you see in your country is you're struggling to get by all these other people seem to have the high life and why, can't you have basic political rights? Take Hong Kong like they could be extradited to China where the guilty rate is 99.99999 right? So that's a political rights issue they see us having in the US and other in Western countries that they want.

Justin: Economic insecurity are playing out all over the world. I mean this isn't just these countries phenomenon economic insecurity for large swaths of the population is going on in the US for example. And so I think the human rights broadly construed in this kind of "what is the contract between government, private sector and technology?" Really, I know that's my thing, so I don't want to overplay that. But technology is certainly changing these relationships and changing the relationship between the state and the citizens in the private sector. And some of it seems to me like we've got to come up with a new type of contract that-

Greg: Tell me more how you think technology plays into ... how does the greater, how does the, the way technology is developing in our economics and politics drive, drive people to protest?

Justin: Yeah. So I think there's at least three. There's just the availability of information that is global for most of these places. So I think it's access to information that you wouldn't have otherwise. I think it's the way in which social media in general has highlighted the extremes and left open plenty of opportunities for manipulation of the stream of information to people. And so many people use social media as their main source of news. It's like ... it's really disturbing.

Justin: The third I think is people can sense that the economic opportunities for lots of people are in question. And so I think automation without kind of being a full Yang-er over here or delving too much into to my own special interests. But I think people can kind of sense, I'll take my, to use a personal example, I'll just take my dad for example. He's been working with Lockheed Martin for on and off for 30 years, essentially in 25 years. And these new folks that are brought in, the way they do their contracts, they don't have the same type of benefits. They don't have the same type of pay. Lockheed Martin that used to be the secure, secure job to the middle class. Those jobs that are left while they're dwindling you, my dad won't be replaced when he retires, when they come in, the social contract between them and the private company is broken because the private company has been able to automate so many sets of their tasks and it does away with their bargaining power.

Justin: And so you can see these trends right? Since going back to the 70's any global inequality has been decreasing. But within societies, which is people's reference points, inequality has been increasing and increases in productivity, haven't related with increases in purchasing power and resources. And so I think a lot of people can sense that it's, and it's kind of spilling over into the broader narrative too. But I think people understand that technology is part of what's playing that disruptive role to what kind of jobs and economic and political opportunities, right? I mean all the stuff that's coming out about the surveillance state, not just in China. I mean, China is the classic example, but they've

been exporting it to Russia who's been exporting it to Africa and the US has been doing some of our own worrisome versions of this.

Greg: I've witness this surveillance too, I mean I think there's hardly any place in London you can go that doesn't have a camera on it now.

Justin: Exactly.

Greg: It's what it's used for...You trust the British government a bit more than you trust the Chinese government with this.

Justin: Yeah, exactly. Well they have better feedback mechanisms. They can vote, which is a good starting point.

Greg: Unless you think Brexit is dumb, in which case the vote was they shouldn't have been able to vote. But that's a whole different story. So this idea of technology is partially, what we've talked about for a long while in this country about what the internet means for politics and what instantaneous communication means for politics. But partially it's the way technology affects the economy.

Justin: Correct.

Greg: And then how technology affects government, but I haven't seen, and that's where I think I pushed back the most on you because although I think those are really serious issues, I haven't seen people get up in arms about them. Right?

Justin: People aren't up in arms, for example, about privacy.

Greg: They aren't up in arms about their data. Right? They aren't up in arms about the fact that the government has all their data or Google has all their data. It seems like at least the attitude of many people in my circles is, "Yeah, I know they've got all my stuff."

Justin: Well, and I think that is ... so, I think my reference point unsurprisingly, given our cultural backgrounds is a little different coming from people who are maybe a little more suspicious in general as they're, a default and being around our Texas folks who are very suspicious of federal government as well-

Greg: I mean....federal government when they want to be.

Justin: Exactly that's true.

Greg: And then when their social security check comes in, they love the federal government.

Justin: Yeah, they do. And then, there's a lot of-

Greg: Cognitive dissonance.

Justin: Yeah, exactly. Cognitive dissonance is the way to put it. So, I mean I think it's an open question as to how much people care about government's role. The pieces that I think are going to play out first are going to be some of the warfare stuff, but that doesn't really apply to what's going on right now. That's a whole different topic. There is some kind of talking within our field within kind of public administration and governance, and I've been talking about this with a few people that these tools will allow for different forms of control that should be worrisome, but I don't think they're actually driving, I don't think that piece is what's driving the protests in any way.

Justin: The two other things I want to say on this is one is there's an interesting piece about how one common theme is that in general these protests are leaderless that these new movements, and maybe that's not that different from 2011 but it is a component of it that there's no specific leader that can be targeted or discredited, which asks, which speaks I think a little bit to the use of technology within the protest and the decentralized tools they're able to use to plan things, up-voting and down voting things, which is kind of interesting.

Justin: But the bottom one that I saw that I thought was odd that I want to throw out your way was that was this suggestion that people are bored. Isn't that great? Boredom. Boredom is what's taking people to the streets.

Greg: Ennui you don't usually think ennui leads to protest, but so tell me what the connection is? If I'm bored, I turn on the television.

Justin: So the argument is that there are no battles anymore in society that you're not out kind of fighting for your family, or fighting for the nation as a normal kind of person in society, things are pretty safe and secure in a lot of these countries. Your normal day-to-day life is boring. And so you're looking for an opportunity to be a part of a narrative. And so given the opportunity to be a part of protest, that there's a spark. All these people have all this time on their hands they want to be a part of something then flood the streets.

Greg: I'm not buying.

Justin: Me neither, but I thought it was an interesting-

Greg: I'm just not buying, I mean-

Justin: So I thought that was like a-

Greg: Technology gives you ways to waste your time in a more creative and interesting and an addictive way than has ever been the case before. I mean, how many times do we just walk around campus and just see everybody on their phones? Right? I mean, I'm not buying boredom.

Justin: I'm not buying boredom either.

Greg: I'm not buying boredom. I mean, and if you're going out against the Chinese security services, right? It's not because you're bored, it's because you are mad. Right?

Justin: I think so. I mean, that's boredom didn't strike me. Now maybe you have time to be mad because you're not busy fighting for survival. And some of these things-

Greg: I mean, I'll grant you that. It's very rare that you have peasant rebellions right?

Justin: Yeah.

Greg: And when you do have peasant rebellions they turn everything over, right. That's the Russian revolution. That's the Chinese revolution. That's peasant. If the peasants decide to throw down their rakes and their hoes and start burning stuff down, the system collapses. And mostly they're fighting for their daily, they're working for their daily bread.

Justin: Yep. So, I mean, I thought that was interesting about this, I didn't buy it. I don't-

Greg: Not buying.

Justin: I think the people are actually I just don't believe people are bored. I mean, it's we have our own sort of ... none of these protests we've talked about been coming out of the US.

Greg: True

Justin: I don't know. I know very few bored people. I know people who are upset about things. I know people who have good things going for them and bad things going for them. And I know people who don't like their economic situation or their personal situation, but I mean maybe some retired people that I know that have a good bit of money and they're just hanging out and maybe they're bored.

Greg: I don't see them on the streets.

Justin: No. [crosstalk 01:02:00]. I think this ties back finally to impeachment, which will be a way to bring us back home at the end. People were so not bored that I don't think people were watching the hearings.

Greg: Yeah.

Justin: And so I think you were right that people saw what they wanted to see out of the hearings, but I think most people just read the headlines.

Greg: They read and watch and watch clips.

Justin: And watch clips. And so I would encourage anyone in our audience to go to some kind of reputable source that's just showing the clips, not the commentary. I watch it on like, I think it was ABC or it could have been The New York Times.

Greg: You can do it at The New York Times. You can do it through The Washington Post.

Justin: And The Wall Street Journal probably has something similar and watch the highlights from day two, three, four and five in particular because I've been following all the headlines and the headlines paint a different story than watching humans interact as this is unfolding and you can see I think a lot of people could see a lot more about what was going on if they weren't so busy and they could stop and actually just take these hearings in because it was coming from someone who follows this stuff closely and reading a bunch of headlines.

Justin: I have to say the hearings were pretty jarring to me in the way in which it didn't fit with the national narrative, so much of like which we've done a little bit of today, like who's winning and what does it mean for the bottom line. But when you watch it just as like an American citizen who's interested in your country and broadly what's going on in the world, just watch them try to just to watch all the players, see how they behave and then see what that says to you about what's going on.

Greg: Then draw your own conclusions. Justin, we've got to wrap up. Happy Thanksgiving.

Justin: It is and it's been an hour, right? Hey, one breaking news for you Greg? Donald McGahn must comply with the white house subpoena court rules in case that could affect impeachment inquiry.

Greg: And then it goes to the Supreme court, it will all end up in Supreme court, but before all that happens, I'm going to have Thanksgiving with my family in Delaware. You're having Thanksgiving where?

Justin: I'll be having Thanksgiving in Georgia.

Greg: Georgia. Okay. So we're both going to the ancestral Homeland?

Justin: Yeah we are. We're back in College Station on Monday. I imagine.

Greg: I'll be back in College Station on Saturday and I'll see you on Monday.

Justin: All right. Looking forward to it Greg and pleasure as always, look out for our live recordings on December 3rd at 6:00 and December 10 at 5:00 and come join us for the fun. Thank you for following along.

Greg: Downtown Uncorked in Historic Bryan.

Justin: Hope to see you there.

Greg: All right. Bye-bye everybody.