

[MUSIC PLAYING]

What does the election of Donald Trump tell us about America? Whether you're studying politics or international studies or anything else, you're bound to have an opinion of this. And I'm joined by William Brown, and Richard Heffernan, and Eddie Wastnidge from the Department of politics and international studies. Richard, you set this topic. Why did you feel that now was a good time to talk about this?

RICHARD

HEFFERNAN:

I suppose because we've just had an election, or we've just had the inauguration of the president. As you sort of try to think about something topical and interesting-- if we were meeting in May, we may think about the election of the French president. If we'd be meeting a year ago, we'd have been thinking about David Cameron's re-election, or last June, his defenestration and our decision to exit the European Union.

So I think it's topical. It's in the news, is it not? Trump is, whatever one thinks of him, a subject of great fascination and interest. And I think it tells us something about his election, about society, and about his presidency, about the reactions to it, because you see the demonstrations in the streets. There are protests and so on. Small minority of people, of course.

1.7 million people in Britain signed a petition today saying that he shouldn't be invited to Britain as part of a state visit. 49% of people according to YouGov poll today think you should be invited. And he is coming, whenever the date is set.

So it's a matter of great interest. So if everyone's talking about it, I suppose we thought we ought to talk about it in some way too.

INTERVIEWER:

But whilst elections can be, of course, a topic area, you're saying that this tells us a little bit more. It's slightly more interesting in terms of what it says about America. And Will and Eddie, you're looking at this from an international relations perspective.

So it's not just that an election's taken place and it's topical, this is throwing up a lot of things about America's relationship with the rest of the world and indeed the democratic process and various things that are happening right now, throws up a lot of issues that maybe have been in the news a few weeks ago.

**RICHARD
HEFFERNAN:**

I think so. What's interesting about the Trump phenomenon is that so-called experts, of which I include myself as one with the emphasis been on so-called, did not think he could get the nomination. He got the nomination. Having got the nomination, people thought that he could not become president. He won the presidency.

It's a week into his term now, or 10 days, so it's a little too early to tell. But he has already nominated a Supreme Court Justice, a name which is going up to the Senate to fill the vacancy created by Scalia's death last year. The former president couldn't get a nomination through, he will.

The executive order restricting the entry to the United States of citizens from seven countries for 90 days has caused some interest. And he's hit the ground running or sprawling, depending on whether you approve or disapprove of him, because he is like Marmite. You either love him or loathe him. There's very little centre ground.

And so his election, I think, is extraordinary, because nobody thought he could do it. I don't think he himself even thought he could do it. I think he just ran a race and discovered that he won and has now to act, to fulfil the hopes that people voting for him invested in him.

It's going to be fascinating to watch. A lot of shouting and screaming about whether you're pro or anti-him, which is kind of dominating the news headlines at present throughout the world, here as much as in the United States, which is quite extraordinary. In the UK, we're devoting our great deal of attention to him.

But I think we should be slightly cool-headed about it. We should try to be objective, not subjective. Not point in screaming and shouting about him. Try to anticipate what he's going to do, and try to understand, because his election explains a lot about the dissatisfaction in the American political culture, about the nature of politics.

If he's such a bad candidate and such an awful person, as many of his opponents suggest, you need to ask yourself, how did he win against someone, a domestic candidate, Hillary Clinton, who was probably the best prepared person for the presidency, first lady for eight years, a United States Senator, Secretary of State for four years, previously ran for the presidency against Obama? And yet, she was beaten in terms of the way they elect their president, by the electoral college.

She won the popular vote, because she got large majorities in New York and California, which weren't competitive. Trump didn't set foot or campaign in those states.

So what is it about America that explains his election? And I think that's the interesting subject that we'll be spending the next four years studying, I think.

INTERVIEWER: So tell us what you think. You'll see some widgets appearing on your screen. If you're in watch and engage option. And if you're not, come into that. Go back to the StudentHubLive.KMI.open.ac.uk website, click on watch and engage, enter your student or staff details, and you can see the chat, because I bet there are loads of questions. But right now, I'd like to know your thoughts on the following.

Does the election of Trump suggest that the US political system is in a state of disrepair, yes or no? Is Trump the strongman America needs? Hillary Clinton lost the presidential race-- sorry, you can fill that in either yes or no. And also, there's a do you agree or disagree, which we may select if there are certain points that we'd like to hear your opinion on.

He's certainly done a lot in the last few days. Well, in terms of a sort of international relations perspective, what might this mean then, for the direction of the US foreign policy? We can see some of the movements that have been made. And there were rumblings going on already.

WILLIAM BROWN: Indeed. I think it is difficult to know what the long-term implications are. The early implications, the early indications are that Trump actually wants to overturn some really central pillars of US strategy that have been in place since the Second World War. It remains to be seen whether he actually achieves that or not or whether the foreign policy establishment in the US manages to restrict what he's trying to do or modify his goals in some ways.

The early indications though, it's very difficult to know how foreign policy is going to unfold, because we don't know how the Trump White House is going to be able to relate to the other major agencies and the cabinet secretaries, secretaries of state, for defence and so on. So far, the White House has pretty much ignored the other agencies and made these executive orders, without involving them at all. And that has certainly got some of the established foreign policy opinion in the United States very worried, because they see that as being radical, they see it as being unpredictable, and they see it as upsetting a great deal of the established practise of US foreign policy that's shared by large sections of both parties.

INTERVIEWER: You're looking at things from a more localised level in terms of a specific area. Are there any

thoughts then, in terms of the Middle East and how things like nuclear deals and those sides of things might come into play in terms of international relations?

EDWARD

WASTNIDGE:

Yeah. It's a very interesting time, as we all agree with. I think, with the nuclear deal, it's hard to say at this stage. It's still early days. Trump did say before the election that it was the worst deal ever. I think he called it the dumbest deal ever just a few weeks ago, actually. And yet, we're still not seeing any clear actual signals on what he's going to do on that.

His pick for Secretary of State is as something of an unknown quantity in terms of his views towards the region, towards the Middle East, towards the nuclear deal. He's not really on record as saying much on that. So it's hard to know how that's going to transpire.

I think what probably helps is that this is a big international agreement. And although Trump seems to be against a little big international agreements on the face of it, I think it's going to be quite difficult to undo. And it has backing from Russia, from China, from the European Union as well.

And because of his blossoming friendship, it seems, with Putin, I don't know if he'd want to really risk that by undoing something that Russia is behind. And Iran is a key ally of Russia's well. So that also may affect how international relations of the region are effected by the Trump presidency.

It is hard to tell at this stage. I'm rather hedging my bets here. But I think we'll see certainly, some interesting collaboration. So looking at Islamic State for example, I think you're going to see Russia and the US probably joining forces to try fight this scourge of terrorism in the region, as Trump calls it.

And that really was the only kind of, when you look at his inauguration speech, that's kind of only foreign policy thing that was mentioned. We're going to wipe-- I don't know-- it was something like wipe Islamic radicalism off the face of the Earth or something equally bombastic. And I think that will be kind of a defining features. And that will actually shape the way he goes about making alliances. So he'll carry on with certain lines in the Middle East, I'm sure. But yeah. It's an interesting time.

INTERVIEWER:

Is this issue of immigration almost-- because obviously, America, within the international community has made such a strong stance, most recently on things like immigration. Those foreign policy aspects and not only important externally, but also in terms of how people are

viewing and integrated within.

**RICHARD
HEFFERNAN:**

The thing about the president is in many ways, he's a tabula rasa. He's not a politician, and so he has no track record of public service that you can judge him by, other than his campaign slogans. He didn't really have a worked out plan.

He has appetites and aversions, like every individual. And for him, often things are black and white. They're either going to be beautiful, or they're going to be sad. They're one or the other.

And politics isn't like that. Politics, you have to govern in alliance and compromise with others. The president is, in terms of his business practise, said to be a deal maker. And so deals involve compromise.

I think on the question of immigration, I think there is a majority in the United States supporting the executive order, which is not that radical or dramatic, despite the protests from the usual sources and the objections from places like the *Guardian* and the BBC. The majority of Americans support the ban, 90-day ban on citizens from seven countries, including, I read today, a majority of white electors, African-American electors, and Hispanic electors.

It's not fundamentally different from what his predecessors have done. Carter in 1980 banned every Iranian. And president Obama, I still call Obama the president, I don't know why. He's around for eight years. He restricted the entry of Syrian citizens.

So there's a lot of screaming at him by people who don't like him. And the danger of that, I think, is because I think that Trump, from what I know about him, as an autocratic personality. And so he thinks if you bend, you're going to break. So he's rigid in terms of his opposition to things he doesn't like.

But the presidency in the United States is a weak reed. Have to work with the Congress. You have to work with public opinion. And you've got to be careful. And I think a lot of these executive orders are kind of just a little kind of marzipan on the top of d cake. He hasn't yet baked the cake.

And he's got to do that. And he'll do that with the Republican majority. So there will be a shift to the right in the United States. But it'll be a shift away from the centre that it is at present. It's not a movement to the far right, however much the *Guardian* may suggest that it is. The idea that he's a fascist, as you read occasionally or see on a placard, is an absurdity.

WILLIAM BROWN: I think it may be the case that he ends up working with Congress. I think the worry among some foreign policy commentators and analysts is that he can do great damage before we get to the point where he's learned how to work with the rest of Congress.

RICHARD Yes. I can see that.

HEFFERNAN:

WILLIAM BROWN: Some of the initiatives he's put in place, some of the statements he's making are already damaging relations, not only with countries that the US has antagonistic relations with, but America's allies. And it's causing an enormous amount of anxiety among allies in very sensitive places, like South Korea, like Japan. And more recently, also taking potshots at the EU and trade relations with Germany. This can unsettle international relations quite significantly, even in the short-term.

RICHARD I think that that is true, which is why, if you're the prime minister of a country in need of a trade deal, it's as well to hold his hand whilst on a state visit and invite him to come on a reciprocal visit to the UK and have tea with the Queen.

WILLIAM BROWN: Well, maybe. I think there is going to have to be a shift among America's allies in the kind of pitch that they make to Donald Trump over their interests, because it's clear that, at the moment, making pitches according to norms, according to American values, according to existing institutions and rules are just not going to cut the ice. But making much more specific transactional bids to the US to pay attention to shared interests or deals that can be made will affect the kind of diplomacy that takes place.

But I think another problem with the opening salvos of Trump's administration are the potential contradictions in what he wants to do. And Eddie touched on one of them in relation to Iran. On the one hand, giving signals that the US can make a deal with Russia and Iran over Syria. On the other hand, taking shots at the nuclear deal with Iran at the same time. And you can't achieve both things once.

It takes Richard's point that politics, particularly international politics isn't black and white. Things aren't all great or sad. You have to make arrangements with people who aren't entirely aligned to your interests and your aims.

EDWARD There's an interesting point to make about people kind of tailoring their approach to him as well. So I think a lot of the autocracies in the Middle East, for example. They're kind of rubbing

WASTNIDGE:

their hands at this kind of anti-terrorist thing, because they're like, OK, this is a great chance for us to then just clamp down on whatever and tie ourselves to that programme as well. So I think, yeah. It's very interesting to see the approaches people have taken.

The other effect it might have international relations more broadly is that we could potentially-- and I think we're already seeing signs of it. Donald Tusk the other day, speaking on behalf of the EU, was saying about some of the issues he had with Trump. And I think we might see this slightly more assertive European position potentially if things carry on as they are and perhaps they are more independent European foreign policy that isn't so closely aligned to US interests as well. And I think that'll be quite interesting to see.

But how far he can go-- on the base of what Richard said in terms of his executive power and whether it will be constrained, to what degree will be constrained by Congress is-- we have to wait and see, I think.

INTERVIEWER: So I'd like to comment, Richard. I know we've been talking about Brexit very much recently. Would you like to comment on anything in terms of the UK'S position within the European community and how that may be changing and shifting with anything going on?

RICHARD
HEFFERNAN: Well, we will vote to trigger Article 50. The parliament is going to vote. There's a majority. There's a vote tonight at 7:00. There'll be one Tory against, Ken Clarke and a handful of Lib Dems, if they turn up. All the Scottish Nationalists and the main 30 Labour MPs.

And Mrs May is producing a white paper tomorrow, which obviously, we don't know what is in it. And then we'll begin the process. And being selfish and strategic, having a close relationship with the Trump administration will be advantageous to Britain in that regard, because after all, Barack Obama did say that we would be at the back of the queue in a line which was scripted for him by David Cameron, because Americans say line not queue. So that worked for Dave in terms of swinging the vote.

And his mother was Scottish, the president. He owns a lot of golf courses in Scotland. They're beautiful golf courses, I'm led to believe.

So I think it is an advantage to us, being selfish and strategic. But Brexit is a leap in the dark. And we need to see where we'll end up at the end of it. But we're leaping. That was the decision taken last June. Parliament will ratify that by passing this short little bill, despite all the recking amendments by a nationalist party before Europeans the British people, other than

Scots. And we'll see what happens.

INTERVIEWER: There is a sense of so much going on. 80% of people are saying that they felt that Trump does suggest the US political system is in a state of disrepair. So a strong majority here agreeing with that. But equally, there's our own stuff going on here as well. So the landscape is quite uncertain.

RICHARD HEFFERNAN: Trump, in political terms-- I've never seen any polling. But I imagine he would probably have a 10% approval rate in the UK. If you take David Cameron as a politician back in his pomp and you dropped him into American politics, he would be to the left of Barack Obama in terms of his belief in levels of high taxation, more public spending, the provision of socialised medicine, opposition to the death penalty, more soft on criminal justice and so on.

America is a much more conservative, small c, right-leaning polity than the Brits. They don't like the state, we like the state. Classic American belief is that a state which is big enough to give you what you want is powerful enough to take away what you have, which was a quote attributed to it to Thomas Jefferson, but actually is from Jerry Ford, a not particularly successful temporary president, not elected.

And a lot of British antipathy towards Trump from the political left reflects that more statist beliefs that the British have. But he's around, right, for four years, unless impeached, which is quite possible, because he's an autocrat. He's not an authoritarian, because no prime minister can be in the United States. But it is my way or the highway.

And sooner rather than later, I suspect, he's going to breach a law that his opponents in the Congress from within the Republican Party will use against him, if not to impeach him, then at least tie him up in trying not to be impeached. So I suspect it will end badly, because I don't think he has the skill set to be president. And I think that's the biggest problem, because not only doesn't have the skill set, he doesn't seem to want to get it.

But then again, people said he was a poor candidate. He was selected. People said he was a poor presidential nominee. He was elected. So maybe we should just shut up and see what he does, right? Because he seems to be proving us wrong all the time.

INTERVIEWER: Well, tell us if you agree or disagree that it will end badly. So use that widget to select the extent to which you would agree or disagree. 62% said it was Hillary Clinton who lost the presidential election as opposed to Donald Trump winning. Will, I know you're really keen to

interject. What were your thoughts on this?

WILLIAM BROWN: It was just on the question of British policy. Because the historical parallel that occurs to me is not with the 1930s. People have been saying Theresa May is guilty of appeasement and that kind of thing. It's more with Tony Blair's prime ministerial shift, because at that time, following 9/11, there was a portion of British foreign policy opinion that was deeply worried about America separating itself off from Europe, losing those security guarantees that exist through NATO.

And part of Blair's strategy was really to hook the administration of George Bush as tightly as possible, come what may. And what came was the Iraq war.

And there's a sense of are also in Theresa May's desperate trip over the Atlantic last week in a context in which Britain no longer also has the option of allying with European nations, because we've chosen to leave that. Tony Blair took a choice of either staying in alliance with the Europeans, who were very against the Bush administration, or standing next to the United States with George W Bush.

Theresa May doesn't have that European option. So there's even more pressure on her to stay close to the US, more or less come what may. And it may be quite unedifying what that involves for some people. But there is a real politic kind of sense to it as well, I think.

INTERVIEWER: Let's see what everyone at home saying, HJ and Evaghn.

HJ: Yes. There's so much interesting chat about this, it's hard to know where to start. But I think a few people agreed that probably the legacy of a lot of former presidents is the election of Trump himself. A lot of people saying that people probably won't listen to. And there's this large undercurrent of people that just felt like no one was really speaking for them, and they saw Trump as probably the only alternative.

But Davin had a point about big tech companies taking up legal challenges towards Trump's stance on immigration. So there's a really interesting opinion piece about some of the reactions of these big companies. And in some ways, it's playing into what Trump was saying, actually, with Starbucks saying it's going to hire 10,000 refugees. And a lot of people viewing that again, as big companies ignoring the white poor working class American and a lack of opportunities, really for them.

INTERVIEWER: Before we come back to Evaghn, let me see who's going to pick up on that.

WILLIAM BROWN: That relationship between the administration and corporate America is going to be an interesting one to watch, because on some of his early moves, promising to cut taxes and so forth, he's clearly got a lot of corporate support for that. Some of the biggest American companies are very critical of the immigration moves. And some of them may be opposed to some of the threats on trade, the idea that America is going to put high tariffs on imports from China, for instance, is going to upset a lot of corporate America and will upset a lot of the Republican Party as well. So those promises that Trump made during the election campaign of a more protectionist trade policy, it'll be interesting to see how that pans out and what sort of response that gets from the American political right as well as corporate America.

RICHARD HEFFERNAN: Trump's probably the least corporately purchased presidential candidate in modern history, because he spent his own money and not much of that. Clinton was the corporate candidate. Amazon and everyone gave her money to try to get her elected. She was the candidate, as the Americans say, of Wall Street, not of Main Street.

Interesting point about part of the election. In 240 counties in the Midwest that Trump won this time, they voted decisively for President Obama in 2012. And one of the narratives is that that's a racist vote for the president now. Well, it wasn't, by definition, in 2012. It's an angry vote, a disappointed vote. That kind of whole hopey changey thing didn't work for everyone, right? Worked for Wall Street, not for Main Street, to use the phrase.

And it remains to be seen whether it'll work for Trump either, I suspect not. But it's an indication of people's aspirations, hopes, and fears.

And so the establishment candidate last November was Hillary Clinton, coiffured. And if there is a white-lash or white backlash, which there obviously is in terms of some of the basis of the Trump vote it's, because identity politics, by their very nature, are divisive. IF everybody can say, vote for me because I'm xyz, then it's not surprising that group S says, do likewise. Very divisive.

The best thing that President Obama said in 2004 was, there's no red states, there's no blue states, there's only the United States. But he didn't follow through on that in office, probably because it's very difficult to do so.

And this president will be as divisive as natural, because being a Molly is not in his nature. He is not a compromiser, even though he is a deal maker, but usually because he forces things

through.

So I don't have any hope that he will be able to deliver what he promises. Though he's certainly shaken things up. He's not only ripped up the rulebook. He hasn't replaced it with a new one. And you need rule books to play politics.

But hopefully, one thing he has done is to kind of shake up the way in which they do politics. You don't need to spend a fortune on getting in a campaign consultant who tells you what clothes to wear, what pantsuit to try on, how to do your hair, and what words to use, because you would never get anyone to advising him to have their hairstyle, right?

[LAUGHTER]

I should talk.

INTERVIEWER: The logic.

RICHARD I should talk. But he's completely unpackaged, and I find that refreshing in the way I can see
HEFFERNAN: the same can be said of Corbyn in Britain.

WILLIAM BROWN: But he takes that also into how he runs policy within the White House. He runs his firms apparently in a very unstructured way, in a way that doesn't brook much disagreement, in a way that doesn't make for good accountability. And that's not a great way to start organising policymaking within the White House.

RICHARD Well, let's see, he's 10 days. But yes. But also one of his motifs is just to appoint people and let
HEFFERNAN: them get on with things.

WILLIAM BROWN: And there's a question as to whether he will let the secretaries, the cabinet secretaries actually get on with policy making or seek to control that from the White House.

RICHARD When he was asked about did he favour torture in an NBC interview last weekend-- the
HEFFERNAN: question was on waterboarding, which is an interrogative measure. But it was presented as torture. He said, referring to waterboarding, that he favoured it and thought it was a good thing. But he would only use it if his Secretary of State and Secretary of Defence recommended it.

Both apparently have said that they're not minded to recommend it. So he's not going to do it.

So this huge big debate last weekend about, he's in favour of torture. Well, he may be in favour of waterboarding, but it seems he's not going to do it. And if he governs like that, he may surprise us.

WILLIAM BROWN: That's where the immigration issue counts again, because he didn't consult with or defer to the Department of Homeland Security.

RICHARD HEFFERNAN: But he hasn't built the wall. And the Mexicans sure as hell aren't going to pay for it. And that's one campaign pledge he gave early on that's saddled around his neck, because if he bends, he considers he's going to break. So he's actually tied to it, he can't deliver it.

Now, you need to regularise the movement of people across the southern border. That's in everybody's interest. You need probably to have what they used to call a *brasero* programme. You come and you go, you come and you go, because most Mexicans or most Latin people who come want to come temporarily not permanently, but they stay permanently, because they can't go back.

So you need to have some sensible position. At the moment, he's painted himself into a mad corner on that. I'm a supporter of the Dream Act and all of these kind of things, very sensible. And he's wrong completely on that.

But it's hard to see how he can back down. But it's also hard to see, impossible to see that he can deliver on it. There isn't going to be a wall, and the Mexicans aren't going to pay for it.

INTERVIEWER: But is this a case of the best political leader being somebody who's surrounding themselves very carefully by the best people who can support those and to some extent, delegating those decisions elsewhere, so you can go around saying these things without having to maybe deliver on them because of your--

RICHARD HEFFERNAN: The best and the brightest got the Americans into Vietnam. So sometimes, Harvard-educated people are not the best people to have around.

I don't know enough about his personnel in his cabinet. They're not the most impressive people, I think.

WILLIAM BROWN: And you don't put Steve Bannon on your National Security Team who has no record in national security and exclude the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

RICHARD HEFFERNAN: True. But then you don't give Alastair Campbell all the responsibility that Blair gave him in eight years in Downing Street or whatever it was. But yes, you are right.

But if everyone's screaming at you from outside, you kind of hug your friends close, however unreliable they are. And so I think it's quid pro quo. If people stop screaming at him for what he says and kind of judged him on what he does, we might be a little better placed to make a judgement about him.

But people seem to enjoy screaming at him. It's another form of leftist virtue signalling, I think, that I find distasteful.

INTERVIEWER: But surely from what he's saying, we do have a right to be worried about what he might do. Eddie, would you like to comment on some of this?

EDWARD WASTNIDGE: Well, I'm only approaching it from my foreign policy area, international relations angle. I think it's a fascinating time. I'll go back to what I said at the start.

We don't know-- I know very little about Secretary of State, who's his chief diplomat. He's an oil man who's the head of Exxon. So you say, well, he's going to be a deal maker or he's close to Putin. That could be beneficial. But we know very little about his positions on lots of things. You just don't know.

And so the trust that he places in these people is fascinating, because we know nothing about them. They've got no policy experience, a lot of them. So how that's going to come out, I really don't know.

But the hope is that these people will kind of rein him in a little bit. But when the blob as he calls it, or the kind of Washington policy establishment's being decapitated, it means that you have this kind of moment we're in right now, where he can push for anything he wants.

I think things will be reined back eventually. But it's just a bit in flux at the moment, I think.

INTERVIEWER: Well, we've gone over already. And no one wants this session to end. I'm not going to take a quick trip to the hot desk and get some final thoughts. And then I'm going to ask you again your thoughts on the question, which is, what does the election of Donald Trump tell us about America, to see, from each of your various perspectives, which are diverse, what your final nuggets are from that.

Before we do that, though-- I'm sorry we haven't been able to feed in, HJ and Evaghn. And I not even having a brilliant, brilliant dialogue in the chat. Where is everyone at right now?

EVAGHN: I think I think everyone's, not say quite divided, but everyone's got an opinion, which is really good. And I think that's the key thing about this. It brings out everyone to understand politics a bit more.

I just want to take a quote from Angel. Not so much worried about the ideas, but how he's going to set about achieving them. And kind of what he does-- well, the people that voted for him can see that he's diminishing mainstream values.

And then just to end, Stewart and Sylvia both said that he's only really two weeks in, so we should judge it at the end rather than judge him now, which I guess is a fair point. But loads, loads going on the chat. It's been probably the busiest session I've ever seen. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Well, you can keep chatting about after it after the session. Right let's get some final thoughts. Richard, you set the question, so you're going to have to go last, I'm afraid. Eddie, what are your final thoughts?

EDWARD What does it say about America?

WASTNIDGE:

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

EDWARD Well, I think it shows that there is a lot of disenfranchised people. And it was an angry and a bit
WASTNIDGE: of a backlash in terms of why he was elected. But I think it says we're going to see a very different America in the world now as a result of that. And that may be to the liking of a lot of his electorate, I think.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you. Will?

WILLIAM BROWN: I think it shows us that it's a very divided country. I think it shows us that the culture of politics is in a potentially quite dangerous place, as I think is the case in Britain and other European countries. And I think it shows America's position in the world is more uncertain now than it has been for some time.

INTERVIEWER: Richard?

RICHARD I think it's fascinating. It's either sad or beautiful, we don't yet know. And some people will fall

HEFFERNAN: either side of that divide.

It's unknown. We really need to judge-- I think the point about waiting to see is probably a wise observation. We spend too much time in political science trying to second guess the future by looking in our crystal balls and getting it wrong, saying that Cameron can't win a majority, that Brexit can't happen, that Trump can't get the nomination, that he can't become president. The Front Nationale can't win the presidency in France.

Let's stop doing that and try to understand the present and try to look with some degree of cool objectivity at what's happening. But it's all opinions, folks. And I suppose, whenever anybody thinks about what's your opinion on Brexit, what's your opinion on Trump, whenever anybody speaks-- and I do it to myself-- we should remember the immortal words of the Dude in *The Big Lebowski*, which is to say, "Yeah. Well, you know, like, that's just your opinion, man."

[LAUGHTER]

And I think that's what it is, just an opinion.

WILLIAM BROWN: We wouldn't get through a discussion without Richard mentioning *The Big Lebowski*.

INTERVIEWER: No. No one wants the session to end. But I'm afraid, unfortunately, it has to. If that hasn't inspired you to study politics and international studies, I don't know what will. Eddie, Richard, and Will, thank you so much for joining me today.

Now, listen, we do this a lot of the time. So select the count me in button on the website if you'd like to hear about other events, because we will be running other events, including discussions hopefully, with the politics and international studies department. So there'll be plenty more of this. So let us know, and then we can tell you when the next live discussion is around.

But I'm afraid that we have to end that for now. We're going to have a short break. And then we're going to come back to our next session in about five minutes. Grab a cup of tea. There's been a lot of chat going on. I'll see you back in five minutes.