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Intelligence Squared U.S.

Automation Will Crash Democracy

For the Motion: Ian Bremmer, Yascha Mounk

Against the Motion: Andrew Keen, Alina Polyakova

Moderator: John Donovan

AUDIENCE RESULTS	
Before the debate:	After the debate:
25% FOR	45% FOR
49% AGAINST	47% AGAINST
26% UNDECIDED	8% UNDECIDED

Start Time: (0:00:00)

[applause]

John Donovan:

One plus one equals two. That is not debatable -- or at least it should not be. But ponder this. Ponder this equation. A while back, we held a debate on whether automation will so disrupt the future of work that we should all be getting a universal basic income. Then, on another occasion, we had a completely separate debate on a separate topic -- looking at the swing toward populism and authoritarianism in our politics with a debate called Western Democracy Is Threatening Suicide. So that equals two separate topics, two separate debates. Now though we want to see what happens when we add these two ideas together into one resolution because we think that one plus one could add up to something surprisingly insightful and exciting and have the makings of a debate. So, let's have it. Yes or no to this statement: Automation will crash Democracy. I'm John Donovan and I stand between two teams of two experts in this topic who will argue for and against the motion.

00:01:06

As always, our debate will go in three rounds and then our audience here at the Kaye Playhouse at Hunter College in New York City will choose the winner. And as always if all goes well civil discourse will also be a winner. Let's meet first the team arguing for the motion. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Ian Bremmer.

[applause]

Ian, welcome back to Intelligence Squared. You are the president and founder of Eurasia Group. That's a leading global political risk research and consulting firm. You are also very recently a bestselling author. Congratulations on that. Your most recent book released just last month is entitled *Us Versus Them: The Failure of Globalism*. You are also president of GZERO Media. And that produces a video series called puppet regime. And it features puppet versions of you and Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin and Kim Jong Un and so on and so forth.

00:02:03

So, bringing this back to our debate tonight, are the puppets coming for our jobs?

Ian Bremmer:

Yes. The puppets thus far are actually creating slightly more jobs. They each require at least one hand.

John Donovan:

Okay. Thank you, Ian Bremmer. And you have as your partner, ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Yascha Mounk.

[applause]

Yascha, to you I also say welcome back to Intelligence Squared. You're a lecturer on government at Harvard. You're a senior fellow at New America, director of the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change. Your most recent book is *The People versus Democracy: Why Our Freedom is in Danger and How to Save It*. It came out last March. Last year the Chronicle of Higher Education published an article whose title was *Can Yascha Mounk Save Liberal Democracy? Can you?*

Yascha Mounk:

God, no. Not singlehandedly for sure. I mean, in the book I show why populism is a real danger and why it has these long-term serious drivers from income stagnation to a more multi-ethnic society.

00:03:04

But I do think that together we can actually stand up for liberal democracy.

John Donovan:

Okay. A note of optimism from the side arguing for the motion. Again, ladies and gentlemen, the side arguing for the motion.

[applause]

And now let's meet the team arguing against the motion that automation will crash democracy. Please first welcome again back to Intelligence Squared Andrew Keen.

[applause]

Hi, Andrew. You are an internet entrepreneur, the author of four books including How to Fix the Future which came out in February. You have been named one of the 100 most connected men by GQ Magazine. And you are host of Keen On Show. That's the popular TechCrunch chat show where you interview prominent scholars and leaders in tech, entrepreneurs and the like. What has been your favorite interview on your program so far?

Andrew Keen:

I think it was when I interviewed Emmanuel Macron just before he was running for president of France. And he had just grown a beard so he looked very cute.

00:04:02

John Donovan:

He looks cute did you say?

Andrew Keen:

Very cute.

John Donovan:

Would he have made -- would he have made the GQ 100 Most Connected Men with that beard?

Andrew Keen:

I think he would be the GQ Most Connected Man.

John Donovan:

Okay. Thanks very much. Andrew Keen.

[applause]

And your partner, and I want to welcome for the first time to Intelligence Squared please welcome Alina Polyakova. Alina, it is great to have you here. You're a fellow at the Brookings Institution, a professor of European studies at Johns Hopkins. Also, author of *The Dark Side of European Integration*. That's about the rise of far-right political parties in Western and Eastern Europe. You have a PHD in sociology from Berkley. And earlier in your career you expected to stay in academia as a professor. What inspired you instead to work in policy?

Alina Polyakova:

Well, I really quickly realized that with all the instability and upheavals in the world, especially with the democratic resurgence that we saw in Ukraine in 2013, I didn't want to be an armchair intellectual anymore and I wanted to do something about it.

00:05:06

John Donovan:

You had to get out there, huh?

Alina Polyakova:

Yeah.

[applause]

John Donovan:

It sounds like. Okay. The team arguing against the motion. Thank you. And again, that motion is "Automation will crash democracy." We go in three rounds. We begin now with round one. Those will be opening statements by each debater in turn. They will be six minutes each. And speaking first for the motion, Automation will crash democracy, and Ian you can make your way to your speaking location, Ian Bremmer, president of Eurasia Group and author of *Us versus Them: The Failure of Globalism*. Ladies and Gentlemen, Ian Bremmer.

[applause]

Ian Bremmer:

Thank you very much. Automation will crash democracy. These are profoundly troubled times. I want to tell you two things that describes that and then give you two stories to explain why automation will crash democracy. First the two things. Number one, the United States -- and not just the United States but almost all of the advanced industrial democracies in the world today are more divided than we have ever experienced in our lifetimes.

00:06:10

That should trouble us. I know it does. It is about Brexit. It is about Trump. It is about the elections we've seen in Hungary and Turkey and Italy and even in France and Germany. One in six Americans today say that they would prefer strong military rule to a democracy. And that's

not because they think democracy doesn't exist. They think the system is rigged against them. Second point. China. For the last 30 years something that the West has truly believed is that as China got wealthier, as they became a middle-income country, they would need to politically reform or they would fail. That's wrong. And what we know today is that they are now a middle-income country.

00:07:00

They are more consolidated politically. They have not politically reformed. Xi Jinping has recently announced himself effectively as president for life. State owned enterprise and state capitalism is stronger than it was before. They are building an alternative model to liberal democracies. So, the two stories. Why is that true? There are a number of reasons, but automation is truly problematic for two reasons. The first. Back in the 1960s Milton Friedman went to China and he saw a big canal being built with thousands and thousands of Chinese workers. And they were all using shovels. They didn't have any heavy machinery. And he couldn't understand why. He asked the Chinese handler "Where are all of the cranes and the bulldozers?" He said, "You don't understand." He said "We do that because we want these people to all have jobs. That's the intention." Friedman said "Oh, I understand. I've got a great idea. Instead of using bulldozers why don't you give them spoons? And see, then you could hire a lot more of them." We all laugh because we say well of course, you know, I mean silly communists.

00:08:03

The capitalists know how to build things. We know how to grow. Turn to 2018 when instead of globalization we have automation where so many more jobs are being displaced if not go away completely and suddenly you realize the Chinese have the one political system in the world that's actually oriented towards insuring the hiring of inefficient labor. In the United States we right now have lower unemployment than at any point in 2000s, 3.9 percent. It feels awesome and yet wages have been flat for the last 40 years. What's it going to feel like in the United States when we hit a recession? Does anyone believe that our political system is really prepared to do for the average worker and make the American dream feel for the average worker what the Chinese dream feels for the Chinese worker today? I don't think so. That's the first story. The second story. Little different story. Twenty-five years ago -- this is a group that probably reads the New Yorker. I get that sense. Right?

00:09:00

You're giving us an evening at IQ Squared. You could be doing something else. You read the New Yorker, right? You remember -- you remember this cartoon? It's a cartoon that had a dog on a computer. And it was sitting next to another dog who apparently was not computer literate. And he said to that dog -- he said, "You know, on the internet no one knows if you're a dog." Right? And that was -- it was beautiful. It was the zeitgeist of the internet. The idea was it was empowering, to people, to little puppies. Right? They could learn everything. It was the

communications revolution. It's what got us the Arab Spring. People with access to information learned that their governments were corrupt. They didn't want to take it anymore. They communicated with each other. Off they go. It promoted liberal democracy. Now today if you are on the internet and you're a dog -- we know. We know what kind of a dog you are. We know what other dogs you're into.

[laughter]

We know where you're doing your business, right? We know all of those things. It's not the communications revolution anymore; it's the data revolution. Right?

00:10:05

It's the information revolution. It doesn't empower individuals. It's top-down. Today, automation-driven and AI-driven algorithms are dividing liberal democracies. They're ripping apart the fabric of society. We live in something close to an information dystopia. I would define one as one where we get our information filtered through the world's largest advertising company. No one can tell me that automation is promoting liberal democracy in that way. And yet, in China, if you actually surf for something that's a little bit off-center politically, they don't say, "Here, let's something even more off-center so we can make more money off you." They don't do that. They say, "No. Here's what everyone else is surfing. Why don't you surf that? And if you continue to surf these unusual things, we may not hear from you very much anymore."

00:11:04

What I'm saying is that automation, both in terms of the disruptive effect on employment and in terms of the disruptive effect on how we consume information, unfortunately, is undermining liberal democracy. And so, yes, I am arguing that automation will crash democracy. Thank you for your support.

[applause]

John Donovan:

Thank you, Ian Bremmer. And that is our resolution -- Automation Will Crash Democracy. And here to make his opening statement against that resolution, Andrew Keen, Internet entrepreneur and author of "How to Fix the Future." Ladies and gentlemen, Andrew Keen.

[applause]

Andrew Keen:

Well, I did a little bit of homework for this. I read Ian's book -- a bestseller. Congratulations, Ian. You didn't mention mine was a bestseller, John.

[laughter]

John Donvan:

Andrew Keen is the author of a New York Times bestseller.

00:12:01

[laughter]

Andrew Keen:

Thank you. The bestseller.

[laughter]

So, Ian was very spirited, as always. We all know him as a television personality, very passionate. But I read his book, and there's some sentence I found in his book that actually reveals what he really thinks. He said, "In 2018, it's too early to know whether the tech revolution will kill more jobs than it creates." Now, I'm from Silicon Valley. And the reality of automation and AI is -- I'm not allowed to swear on this show, but you know what I would say if I could. We have no idea of what's happening. AI is the big new thing in Silicon Valley. Every new tech company is basically an automation or AI company: Apple, Facebook, Google. They're all trying to reinvent themselves as AI companies, as artificial intelligence companies, building their products, their platforms, their services around machine learning.

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But nobody knows how this thing is going to work out. Nobody has any idea -- as Ian correctly argues in his bestseller, "Us versus Them" -- that we have no idea in 2018 where we're at. Everyone has different positions. Bill Gates and Elon Musk argue that automation is so powerful, so inevitable, so all-consuming that it will create machines with consciousness. They will be our final invention. They will enslave us. Others argue that we shouldn't concern ourselves at all; that AI is actually rather impractical and that we are exaggerating. To quote, you know, the idea that we're living in these troubling times, of course, is a perpetual theme, a perpetual trope when it comes to readers of the New Yorkers. We pride ourselves on living in troubling times.

00:14:01

That's what gives us our pleasure.

[laughter]

And I'm afraid to tell you that we aren't. We're not living in any more troubling times than we've ever lived in. We've always created technology that dramatically changes the world, and

we've always coped as human beings. One of the troubling things I think about what Ian was presenting is he's presenting us as somehow powerless in the face of this new technology, powerless in the face of automation and AI, powerless to shape our own world. What Ian is suggesting is that we don't have agency. And that is, of course, what computers don't have. Ada Lovelace, the 19th century mathematician who invented the very idea of software, famously said that the one thing software can't do is think for itself. It can't have consciousness. It can't have goals. It can't have agency. It's not human. And that is the reality in 2018, in 2038, and in 2138.

00:15:06

The title of this debate is "Automation will kill" -- or will crash -- thank you, Robert -- will crash democracy. We need to define what automation is. We also need to define "will." It's not might. It's not could; it's "will." This is a debate which suggests that automation inevitably will crash democracy. It's as if some sort of computer software program -- that our societies will shut down because of AI. It doesn't take into account human beings. It doesn't take into account us. Automation, as I suggested, is AI -- is this profound revolution in Silicon Valley, but no more profound than the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century. We heard this argument before. We've always had pessimistic intellectuals like Ian tell us we live in profoundly troubling times.

00:16:06

In the middle of the 19th century, we had exactly the same kind of whiners, telling us that industrialization --

[laughter]

-- would take away everything of value, undermine society, rural society, religion, masculinity, meaning, marriage, blah blah blah. And they were wrong, and they've always been wrong, because the nature of the human condition is to break things and then fix them. We've proved it in the industrial age and we will prove it in the age of automation. As Alina will talk about, there are many, many practical ways in which automation can actually enrich society. So, what exactly is "Democracy?" We know what automation is. Democracy is one of those slippery words. It's kind of like pornography. We know it when we see it, but we can't define it.

[laughter]

00:17:00

I would suggest that democracy is this. Democracy is you guys voting. Democracy is thinking for yourselves and having the autonomy and freedom to shape your world, to articulate your interests. The important thing to bear in mind about this debate is that automation and democracy are entirely different things. Automation is bound up in the what might -- one

might think of as the inevitable law of technological narrative. Well, as has been phrased in Silicon Valley, Moore's law -- M-O-O-R-E's law -- Gordon Moore of Intel. Democracy is what I define in my book, the bestseller, "How to Fix the Future" --

[laughter]

-- thank you, John --

John Donovan:
Andrew Keen, I'm sorry. Your time is up.

Andrew Keen:
Thank you.

[laughter]

Moore's law.

John Donovan:
A bestseller.

[applause]

Debating for the motion, Automation will Crash Democracy, Yascha Mounk, senior fellow at New America and author of "The People v. Democracy: Why our Freedom is in Danger and How to Save It."

00:18:09

Ladies and gentlemen, Yascha Mounk.

[applause]

Yascha Mounk:
Should I start [unintelligible] it's the bestselling -- no, I'm not going to do that.

[laughter]

I love listening to technologists, don't you? You always learn so much. You learn, for example, that nothing bad has ever happened since 1800. I'm glad to hear that.

[laughter]

They also just have a wonderful way of having their cake and eating it too. The last time I was in Silicon Valley and spoke to a bunch of more senior people there, they were telling me how amazing the world is going to be after the rise of technology. One of them said, "Just wait five years." And he pointed out a hotel window at a green field. "We're going to have one machine building a house all on its own, and it's going to happen in five years, I promise." And then you ask, "What is that going to do to the political system? What's that going to do to the economy?" "Oh, things will be fine somehow."

00:19:02

Does automation crash democracy? Well, crash is -- you know, it falls to the ground. Many might try and fix it somehow. That's about what Andrew Keen is saying. We're somehow going to fix it once we've crashed it; let's not worry too much about what it's going to look like. Now, let me be clear here about the nature of automation we're talking about, because the argument is always, "Oh, people worry, and they've always worried, and it's going to be the same as it is in the past." When you listen carefully to technologists, what they're saying is that we're facing a new kind of automation. That what we're going to get is the rise of a kind of general intelligence, a machine that can rival at least the human intelligence of an average person. And if that happens it is not just a normal technological shift that, you know, the scribes who used to write out books line by line are substituted by the printing machine or anything like that. It would actually mean that most people can no longer find employment.

00:20:04

I don't know whether that's going to happen but that's what technologists telling me when I'm in San Francisco. And what I wanted to say today is some of the implications that'll follow if that is true, if 50 percent of jobs really do go away, if most people can no longer find employment. And my argument is very simple. Some of the people who have studied where democracy has been established around the world and where it has failed have come up with a very simple model. They've said democracy takes hold when the cost of tolerating democracy for elites is lower than the cost of quashing democracy. What will automation do? It'll systematically increase the cost of tolerating democracy for elites and decrease the costs of quashing democracy. Why is that the case? Well, the biggest cost to elites of democracy is having to share some of the wealth through progressive taxation, through distribution, and so on.

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And the more inequality there is in a society the more demand there is for redistribution. Well, as we have the rise of automation as the few people who still have the skills that are really needed can command huge salaries, as a few owners of the means of production, of robots, manage to get more and more of the gains of these technological developments, and as more and more people are out of a job, inequality in our society is going to skyrocket. And over time that'll obviously mean that the losers of these developments are going to demand to get a little

bit more of a piece of a pie. Demands for redistribution are going to increase and the cost of tolerating democracy will as well. We might be able to deal with that but at the very same time you'll also see the costs of quashing democracy decrease. We've only ever had democracy in the time period from the French Revolution until today when political leaders needed citizen armies, when we could rely on average citizens to stand up to defend the country against enemies abroad and to keep the peace at home.

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But you will no longer need that if you have general intelligence because the robots can do that job for you. They can be your security guards. You no longer need to keep the bulk of society happy. You no longer need a middle-class workforce. For the last 150 years capital needed skilled people in the companies. They even needed the cleaner who came by towards the end of a workday to be well compensated enough that you would not be too disruptive and a little friendly to you. Well, if we get general intelligence you no longer need either of those things. You don't need a middle of a range workforce because machines are doing the job. You certainly no longer need a cleaner. So, once you get the incentives aligned in that way, the temptation for elites to say "Why should we share more and more of our wealth?"

00:23:07

Why don't we just retreat to our nicely guarded gated communities guarded by robots?" is going to increase more and more. Now I do think that human agency here is possible. I do think that if early enough we respond to all of this with sensible programs of economic redistribution we can actually save democracy. And this is what Andrew Keen is saying. He's saying "You know what? It's fine. We're going to fix it somehow." Well, how is our response to climate change going? How is our response to automation globalization going so far? My fear is that on the right of a political spectrum people will just say "What we have to do to get more jobs is to slash corporate tax and get rid of regulation and somehow the jobs are going to come back up." And what you might get on the left of a political spectrum is a bunch of promises about jobs guarantees and coming up with a bunch of fake jobs which have actually been automated away.

00:24:05

Our ability to respond to this fundamental transformation in the economy if general intelligence does occur is very limited. And that's why it's not foreordained but quite likely that automation on that scale would indeed crash democracy.

John Donvan:

Thank you, Yascha Mounk. And that is our resolution, Automation will crash democracy. Our final debater in the opening round will speak against the motion. Alina Polyakova is fellow at the Brookings Institution and author of *The Dark Side of European Integration*. Ladies and gentlemen, Alina Polyakova.

Alina Polyakova:

Thank you, John. And thank you, Yascha, for starting to lay out my argument for me. That was -- that was very kind of you. So, I will give you this much. We are at the brink of the fourth industrial revolution. Some economic restructuring as we've seen in the past and we have periods of technological change is inevitable.

00:25:03

And yes, it's inevitable that some jobs currently performed by humans will be frankly better performed by machines. But what's not inevitable in any way as Yascha says in his book, history is not linear. You know, we thought that we were all heading towards the end of history back in 1989. End of History, Fukuyama. And we're not at the end of history, right? So, we always tend to project from our current moment into the future. And frankly that's not how history works. So, the nightmare scenario what we have this deep inequality, the haves and have nots, robots are our overlords and we just tend to them, and this is the reality that, you know, our children and our children's children will face is not inevitable in any way. But how do we avoid the nightmare? Because it is a possibility, right? It is a possibility. Well, we avoid it exactly by not giving in to the fears and anxieties that are very human.

00:26:04

If we turn away from the coming technological revolution, because it is coming at us like all technological revolutions have, democracies will be left in the dark. And we will give the space to authoritarian regimes like Russia and China to lead in this -- in this dimension. But if we resist that fear and we embrace technological change and we face it as a nation, as a people, as governments, as citizens then a new future is indeed possible. And as Ian says in his book, and I quote, history of personal experience shows that people give their best when the best is required of them. And that is indeed true. And that has been true for the -- since the end -- since the beginning of time. So just as we have smartphones and smart-homes we need to think about how do we have smart democracies?

00:27:06

Because democratic systems can be more dynamic and are by design more flexible and adaptable to rapid change. Authoritarian regimes are not. Think about Russia and China, right? These are regimes that suppress dissent, that censor free speech online. These are the actions of very nervous, anxious societies that are fearful of the coming change. This is not what democracies are built on. Democracies are built on openness, plurality, resilience. And guess what? We have a huge comparative advantage here. We have the advantage that only in democracies can citizens mobilize, activate, and push their political leaders to get through the kinds of social policies that will make this difficult and challenging adjustment period much more smoother and much easier.

00:28:03

Look back at history. Beginning of 20th century the United States went through a huge technological upheaval, right? And at the same time did we fall down on our knees? No. We survived, and we actually thrived. Right after that time the United States became the top economic power. It wrote the rules of the international order. And we became a much more inclusive universal society over the same time period. So, we have the handbook. We know how to get through the next technological revolution and we can, and we will do it again. And you know what? New technology is actually making it a lot easier, not harder. Think about the Parkland students from Florida just recently. Look at what they were able to achieve in a matter of weeks. This would have taken years in the past. Think about how much more and faster we could have gotten the civil rights movement and the women's rights movement if Facebook and Twitter existed in 1960s.

00:29:04

Probably a lot further. So smart democracies will be those democracies that can combine the mass economic efficiencies and benefits that automation will offer inevitably with economic security for its citizens. And, you know, to be frank a post-automation society sounds pretty good, right? Humans evolved to be complex thinking machines. We did not evolve to hammer the same widget a thousand times, over and over again, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Machines can do that for me. I'm fine with that, right? We will be liberated when we have machines doing these rote manual tasks for us. We will be able to actually fulfill our human potential and creativity, which we all inherently have. And it's not going to be about us versus them, as the title of Ian's book suggests.

00:30:04

It's going to be us and them. It's about intelligence augmentation. So, IA versus artificial intelligence being the enemy -- or AI. Right? And you know, Andrew and I, we're not naive. We're not looking at the world through these rose-colored glasses. We are just people who refuse to give into fear-mongering when we don't actually know what the future holds. We refuse to give into paranoia. We're pragmatic realists, and we can look at the past and see that we have dealt with similar challenges before, and we can do it again. So, refuse with us. Vote no. Thank you.

John Donvan:

Thank you, Alina Polyakova.

[applause]

And that concludes Round 1 of this Intelligence Squared U.S. debate, where our motion is, "Automation will crash democracy." Now, we move on to Round 2. And in Round 2, the

debaters address one another directly, and they take questions from me and from you, our live audience here at Hunter College in New York City.

00:31:04

The team arguing for the motion -- Automation Will Crash Democracy -- Ian Bremmer and Yascha Mounk -- have argued that these are profoundly troubled times that we live in, that the current technological revolution is different from those that preceded it, in terms of its threat to the social fabric and to democracy. They say that algorithms are tearing apart our political discourse -- that if automation leads to the end of 50 percent of existing jobs, that will lead to an inequality that will crack democracy down the middle. They also point to the example of China as a frightening example of a society which is succeeding with its -- with the technological changes, while not actually embracing democracy at all. The team arguing against the motion -- Andrew Keen and Alina Polyakova -- take very strong issue with the idea that this time it's different. They say that there have been many, many times that warnings have been sounded about new technologies.

00:32:02

They have a basic optimism and faith in the resilience of American democracy, as it exists now. But they go even further, and they talk about -- they paint a picture of something they call "smart democracy," a time in which there will be more opportunity for individuals to give voice to their political power, and in which we will be liberated by the robots from the kinds of monotonous, repetitive tasks that keep us from being fully human. So, they have a much more positive view of the future. And I want to start by taking just that very positive view to the opponents' -- opposing side, to Ian Bremmer, to start with -- your opponents' basically arguing not just "we've heard it all before" -- which I don't think you're surprised to hear -- but also an argument that there's great promise for democracy and the kinds of changes that come, that we -- our democracy -- our ability to be democratic agents, each one of us, will get greater with technological change.

00:33:02

Can you take on that question?

Ian Bremmer:

I didn't hear that from them. What I heard was that --

John Donvan:

Well, did I mischaracterize you?

Alina Polyakova:

No. That was correct.

Ian Bremmer:
What I heard --

John Donvan:
Okay.

Ian Bremmer:
-- what I heard was that technology is going to create far more opportunities, all right? And I agree with that. I think globalization has been a very positive thing. I think it's a great system. It's by far the first economic system. Lots of growth, efficient trade, cheaper products - - except that a lot of people are left behind. The problem I have with globalization is not globalization. It's the deficit of the political system in responding to those people who are left behind. What I did not hear from the opposing team is that as automation grows -- not that there's a problem with technology, but no one is giving me any reason to believe that liberal democracies are going to be able to effectively respond politically to all of those people -- the far more that will be left behind. And I said exactly what Andrew quoted; he didn't misquote me, in my book.

00:34:01

I said that we don't know if there are going to be more -- as many jobs or if jobs will be destroyed by automation and AI. But what we do know is that the jobs that are created -- however many they will be -- the people in our societies today are not trained for them. They are not prepared for them. And we also see absolutely nothing in our political system today in the United States, in Europe that is prepared to actually transform them. If we leave this many people behind over the last forty years, when the changes come comparatively incrementally when we have a sense of how many people are going to go and work in factories abroad? Do you think our political system is going to get better when the technologists on the other side say, "We literally have no idea what's going to go ahead -- but the technology will be great. I'm sure the politics will work." We have far too many technologists that are prepared to tell us that the politics will be just fine.

John Donvan:
Okay.

Ian Bremmer:
Historically, that's how we get into wars.

John Donvan:
Alina -- who would like to respond on your side? Alina Polyakova.

Alina Polyakova:
I can respond.

00:35:00

I didn't have a chance to fit this into my six minutes. But you know, we did respond from a policy perspective -- at the turn of the century that I mentioned, during the great upheaval in the United States. What did the U.S. government do? The U.S. government is actually the first to introduce mass public education [inaudible] --

John Donovan:

Do you mean the turn of the 19th to the 20th century?

Alina Polyakova:

Correct.

John Donovan:

Okay. Just want to be clear.

Alina Polyakova:

Yeah. Sorry about that.

John Donovan:

Okay.

Alina Polyakova:

Not the recent century. And the United States was also the first government to lay a path for post-secondary education by establishing state universities. And all these welfare states in Europe that are now paying for their expansive social programs and free education actually learn from us. So, we can do that again. But it will take good social policy. So, you talked about these people -- they'll be left behind because they don't have the skills, right? There are already private-public initiatives that are happening between Facebook, and LinkedIn -- and Andrew can talk about that. He's from Silicon Valley -- that are trying to re-train people, give them the kinds of digital skills they will need in this new digitized economy.

00:36:04

This is happening in the local level, at the state level, and it will happen at the federal level as people start to push for more and more funding and resources of these kind of programs, just like we did 100 years ago. We will do it again.

John Donovan:

Yascha Mounk, are you persuaded?

Yascha Mounk:

I'm just so touched and moved by the [unintelligible] political system. I want to read whatever newspaper you're reading, because when I look at the news, I don't have that much trust --

Alina Polyakova:
Breitbart.

Yascha Mounk:
[inaudible] -- to respond rationally to changes --

[laughter]

-- in what's going on.

[applause]

The -- I've heard two main lines from the other side. The first is a line that Alina said. We have a handbook for how to deal with all of this. No, we don't, because the kind of automation that technologists are talking up in Silicon Valley is going to be profoundly different from what we've seen before. It's not just one particular kind of routinized activity being substituted by robots, and there's all kinds other routinized activities that could still be done by humans.

00:37:00

It is intelligent machines learning to adapt on the fly to all kinds of different tasks. And that puts us into a completely new situation, and no, we don't have the handbook to deal with that. And the other line I'm going to keep hearing over and over again from the other side is, you know, this time isn't any different from the past. Let's assume that that's true for the moment - - and think of all of the deep political upheaval that we've seen over the last 200 years, as we've had moments of automation. Think of the luddites. Think of the deep economic crisis of the late 1920s and the horrible wars that that led to. I don't think that this time isn't going to be different. I think it might well be different. But even if they're right, that it's just going to be just the same, we will be in for a world of hurt and for a world of chaos, and in a very different changed world in which China is stronger, in which authoritarian regimes are stronger, in which already our political systems are less functional. We just cannot assume that we are going to be able to deal with that in a rational way.

John Donvan:
Andrew Keen.

Andrew Keen:
So, our friends on the other side keep on using this word "profoundly."

00:38:05

According to Yascha, we're living in profoundly different times. Ian says it's profoundly troubling times. I think they're profoundly wrong.

[laughter]

The reality is, is that -- well, let me make two points. Firstly, Ian's point that we're living in profoundly troubling times -- he kept on mentioning China and he kept on mentioning the collapse of democracy around the world in Turkey, and Poland, and Hungary, and Russia. He's absolutely right about that. I might even use "profoundly troubling" in those sense. It's got nothing to do with automation. I haven't seen a lot of AI in Putin's Russia, unless he's using it to undermine our system, using it with bots. I haven't seen a lot of automation in Poland, or Hungary, or Turkey. So, the problem with the crisis of democracy in the early part of the 21st century is an atavistic longing for community, a fetishization of territory and blood, which has absolutely nothing to do with AI, nothing at all.

00:39:08

The -- and the China thing is a distraction as well, because China isn't a democracy. So, whether or not China does well as a non-democracy has nothing to do with this issue of automation-d crashing democracy. Let me also take up Ian's point. I just wrote a book. Seriously, I wrote a book about how we are indeed responding. There is a movement around the world, for example which I know Alina has looked at very carefully, guaranteed minimum income. We acknowledge that people will lose their jobs. So, what are we going to do? We're going to guarantee them an amount of money, so they can survive, so that they won't trash democracy. And these are initiatives in Switzerland, in Finland, in Brazil, all around the world.

Ian Bremmer:

One of them has just been abolished by the way. One in Switzerland was voted down.

Andrew Keen:

The one in Switzerland was voted down.

00:40:01

But I interviewed for my book the person who began it. And in Zurich a majority voted in favor. And he considered it a success because it began the conversation. Just as in the middle of the 19th century the first initiative to stop 11-year-olds working in factories or allowing people to unionize those were put down. It takes time. We -- our problem is our impatience. We expect there to be an app to fix the future. It takes time.

John Donvan:

Let me move this to a slightly different place. Yascha, in your opening statement you laid out a sort of dynamic in which you said that democracy will be crashed because it will come to the point where for the elites it would become -- it will become more costly to accommodate democracy than to try to quash it. And so that's a sort of 30,000-foot explanation of an overall principle but I want to just ask you to bring this down to the very practical level, or Ian as well,

of an individual who loses his job, loses his or her future. Let's say college educated. Or -- and let's put together a collection of individuals.

00:41:02

Blue collar, white collar in a neighborhood or in a state or in a city. They are among the losers. What are you telling me they're going to do politically that cracks democracy? What choices are they going to be making are you talking about?

Yascha Mounk:

Well the first one is interesting but you're just thinking about a guy who lost his job. He might be a danger to democracy but so might the person who actually now owns an army of robots. So, I think that there's two different ways in which democracy might come under pressure. The first is that there's going to be enclaves of very rich people who actually own all of the productive material in society which is the machines and robots and so on being asked to give up more and more money in order to finance that nice universal basic income scheme that Andrew is talking about. And at some point, they're going to think "Why? I don't have anything from these people."

John Donovan:

So --

Yascha Mounk:

They're not actually helping me.

John Donovan:

So, what the quote unquote masses would be doing would be voting or demanding politically a larger share of the pie. They would be looking --

Yascha Mounk:

Yes.

John Donovan:

-- for greater redistribution.

Yascha Mounk:

But that's in a best-case scenario. In the worst case scenario, we get what we've seen around the world.

00:42:00

To say that the rise of populism has nothing to do with the fact that incomes in United States and other countries have stagnated for many decades is deeply naïve. One of the reasons why people have turned back to nationalism, have turned back to these authoritarian forces, is that

they no longer believe that our political system is working very well. And they're very willing to go with somebody like our current president who says "Just trust me. I alone am going to fix it. All of this system is corrupt and inefficient. I really speak for the people. Give me a little bit more power and everything is going to turn out for the best." The idea that all people want is a little bit of income and if the state gives them some money every month we're going to be happy which is the idea of universalized income that Andrew Keen is talking about is deeply naïve. We live in a society in which for centuries and millennia people's self-worth has come from having a job and gaining status from that.

John Donovan:

I want to get into that --

Yascha Mounk:

And think that we can just substitute that by giving people a little bit of money every month is quite naïve.

00:43:00

John Donovan:

Before we go deeper into the universal basic income I just want to see if Ian Bremmer if you -- if you can also flesh out this picture of what the average -- let's say, you know, we're still in the phase when the apparatus of democracy to the degree that it's a voting system in addition to all the other aspects of liberal democracy is still functioning. What do you see them doing? What would the presidential campaign be? What would those folks be doing?

Ian Bremmer:

I would want to challenge the notion that still functioning is a question of whether or not there's a revolution and creates an authoritarian regime. One of my favorite quotes which I put in the book is from William Gibson. And it's about -- says the future is already here. It's just not evenly distributed. Our history is littered with incidents of people not being necessary, not being empowered, and as a consequence being left behind in functioning democracies. We see it today in Israel. One of the most effective and advanced industrial democracies not just in the Middle East, in the entire world. They don't need the Palestinians anymore. Don't need their labor.

00:44:01

Have the ability to wall them off. And you know what? Israel's an awesome democracy as long as you don't count the Palestinians? Now is that a functioning democracy or is that a crashing democracy? Because in the -- one of the reasons I am concerned about universal basic income -- Andrew's right. I think that eventually if we don't have jobs for people we'll do more experiments of UBI that won't be voted down like Switzerland. The Finns just said after one year, we don't want to pay for it anymore. Eventually they'll do it. They'll do it like the Saudis did. You know what happens when -- when you give people money and you feel like you don't

need them anymore. They're no longer -- you've taken care of your responsibility. You start treating them a little differently. You start treating them less like people. I don't consider that a functional democracy.

John Donvan:

Let me bring in Alina Polyakova.

Alina Polyakova:

So, two points in response to that. One, I just want to point out that Yascha's using a very old Marxist argument here. Marx was writing in the 1800s. And his basic thesis was, you know, as modern capitalism advances, you know, the higher ups, the owners of the means of production own all the capital and then everybody else is going to become a worker and the conditions are going to be worse and worse and worse.

00:45:08

And eventually we were going to have this beautiful communist revolution where the workers are so angry they're going to, you know, push out the capitalists or the capitalists try to suppress them. And, you know, that didn't work out so well, right? And here we are. And it's 200 years later. None of those predictions have come to pass. So, I just want to point that out to you, Yascha, you're still living in a -- in an old world.

Yascha Mounk:

I agree. There's an alternative scenario which is that the robots become conscious and start coming down on us instead. So, it's -- you know, you might -- you might be right.

Alina Polyakova:

Well, that takes me to my next point. I think before we even get to the conversation about universal income or other programs to try to make the adjustment, the economic restructuring, easier there's an underlying assumption that is inherently false here which is that automation will lead to mass unemployment. And that is not correct. Because we can all say, you know, the prediction is that millions of jobs worldwide, 400 million, 800 million, are going to be lost to automation.

00:46:07

But how many more will be created? We have no idea actually. And in fact, if we look at every technological revolution we saw far more jobs created or people transitioning into a different industry versus just mass unemployment. You know what? Modern democracies in the West are dying out. And in fact, what we're likely to face in the next 20, 25 years -- it's not going to happen in five years -- is we're not going to have enough people to fill those jobs. And that's already happening. Look at the unemployment rate in the United States. Look at some of the small businesses in places that agricultural like Idaho, Ohio. They're actually complaining because they can't find workers. Right?

John Donovan:
Let me --

Alina Polyakova:
This is the new reality.

John Donovan:
Andrew Keen wants -- your partner wants to join.

Alina Polyakova:
Yeah.

John Donovan:
Can you yield the floor? Thanks.

Andrew Keen:
Yeah. I want to reiterate what Alina is saying. The reality of the AI revolution, it will create new scarcities.

00:47:02

Machines can't develop empathy. Machines aren't creative. Machines can't think for themselves. Though actually could conceivably, not inevitably, because that's the problematic word in this conversation. But this revolution could potentially enable a second or third renaissance. It's just as likely, not inevitable but possible. But I want to come back to something that Yascha is saying because he's falling into the very trap that I warned you about. He's presenting technology and monopolies as inevitable. He's talking about winner take all technology companies. They're going to control everything. They're going to compound inequality. What Yascha is forgetting is politics. He's forgetting democracy. Look what's going on in Europe. Margrethe Vestager, the EU Commissioner of Antitrust, is fighting Apple, fighting Google, fighting Facebook. The --

John Donovan:
Who do you think will win?

Andrew Keen:
Who do you think will win?

00:48:00

She just fined Apple \$12 billion. Google is now under three antitrust investigations. Now the problem in America is that the political system is paralyzed, but that's got nothing to do with this bigger issue. Ian is suggesting -- sorry, Yascha is suggesting we essentially lie back and think

of Silicon Valley and just assume it's inevitable and there's nothing we can do. We can do stuff as consumers, as entrepreneurs, as citizens. And politics is the answer, it's not the problem. But these guys present politics as the problem. It's the solution. It always has been, and it always will be.

John Donovan:

Let's let Ian Bremmer respond to that point.

Ian Bremmer:

I certainly would not suggest we lie back and allow Silicon Valley they're going to win because it's not necessarily Silicon Valley. Right now, it's either Silicon Valley or it's China. Those are the drivers of automation.

00:49:00

When you asked who's going to win in Europe it's not going to be the Europeans. I don't know if it'll be Silicon Valley or the Chinese. That's a really interesting question. But let's keep in mind that in China AI is driven by the state, the political system. In the United States it is not. It's driven by corporations. In other words, at no point are the political systems, the liberal democracies, actually driving AI. That's a problem. They don't understand it. In the United States we wouldn't know how to regulate. Did you see Mark Zuckerberg trying to explain to senators what a Facebook was? Did you guys see that? Right? Do not count on these people to be effective arbiters and umpires. But there's --

[laughter]

[applause]

-- one -- okay. I yield my time to applause, but there's one other point I wanted to make --

[laughter]

-- which is no one -- everyone keeps talking about the automation point of jobs. No one else has picked up on the point of what automation, AI, is doing to information consumption.

00:50:00

And we all have one of these. Maybe there's one 95-year-old person in the back that doesn't. The rest of us do. We spend way too much time on them. We're doing an incredible social experiment right now, giving all of our kids -- we're saying, "Here, use these to connect with absolutely everybody. Let's see what happens in 20 years." Within five, it's going to be virtual, right? It's going to be augmented reality. It's going to be completely immersive. And those -- United States control those filters -- by corporations that want to make money. In China, controlled by the government. Again, automation and AI crashing liberal democracy. And I

don't see us doing anything to stop our kids from having those 24/7 in 10-years' time. I don't see that isn't profoundly disturbing to at least the model of government that we've had --

John Donovan:
All right.

Ian Bremmer:
-- through our lives.

John Donovan:
Let me take a question to your opponents. First of all, I want to say, if there a 95-year-old guy in the back, at this debate, he's got a cell phone.

[laughter]

I want to take to the team arguing against the motion. You're talking about -- you have a great deal of faith in the robustness of our democracy to give voice to the people.

00:51:01

But what if the choice that the public -- the voting public ultimately makes through the process is to try to put the brakes on this kind of innovation because it threatens them? Would that not, in a way, actually work to undermine the very democracy you're talking about?

Alina Polyakova:
I'll respond to that.

John Donovan:
Alina Polyakova.

Alina Polyakova:
I can respond to that quickly. Of course, they will. This has happened before. I don't know if any of you know the derivation of the term "Luddites." I'm sure that some of you do. But Luddites are actually real people in England who attacked the machinery in their cotton mills because they were afraid of what that might mean for their jobs. This happens all the time -- where, in "Office Space," that scene where they're all destroying the copy machine is one I always think of as, you know, the moment when we think the machines are enemies. This is what we have to flip. The machines [inaudible] --

John Donovan:
Well, but I'm asking, what if they're successful? What if they successfully slow down the process of innovation -- in a world where Ian has just China is moving full-speed ahead. Doesn't the vibrancy of our democracy actually rest on the vibrancy of our economy and innovation, et cetera?

00:52:03

And if the public successfully makes that demand to shut down the technological speed and process -- progress that we're going through, that would -- first of all -- stop the innovation, and that would undermine democracy?

Alina Polyakova:

I don't think they can at this point in time. And frankly, the China question keeps coming up. I'm pretty skeptical about top-down approach to innovation. Innovation is inherently entrepreneurial, as Ian -- you know, you're an entrepreneur. Would you have been able to be the same entrepreneur in China? Probably not. So, I'm pretty skeptical that China will continue on the rising path that it's currently on -- because, at the end of the day, the inherent *raison d'etre* of the regime is to stifle innovation, entrepreneurship, and stifle any sort of freedom. This is not the kind of kind of country that will lead in the long-term.

Andrew Keen:

Yeah. John, you're turning the debate upside down. You're saying democracy will crash automation.

Alina Polyakova:

[affirmative]

John Donovan:

Well, I'm -- actually, I --

Andrew Keen:

Isn't that the point --

John Donovan:

-- I'm asking if there's a circular process there.

00:53:02

Andrew Keen:

Well, certainly, the sort of notion of absolutes -- the -- this -- again, I think it's part of this debate, that somehow you have technology, and then it will ruin democracy. These things aren't autonomous. And democracy will play a role in shaping automation, civilizing it, making it accountable. We're already seeing it in -- as Alina said -- in public-private partnerships. We're already even seeing it in Silicon Valley. We can all joke about Mark Zuckerberg -- and sure, he's a bit of a schmuck -- but rich schmuck, of course --

[laughter]

-- but Silicon Valley is growing up. There are more and more people who recognize that there is a need to make AI accountable, to make it more responsible, in terms of jobs. Even Travis Kalanick [spelled phonetically], the baddest of bad boys in Silicon Valley, the ex-CEO of Uber -- I've known him for years -- he started a VC fund focusing on the creation of jobs. If Travis can do it, anyone can.

Yascha Mounk:

There's an important question on the floor here, which is, which side thinks that things are inevitable?

00:54:05

Right? If you listen to Alina and Andrew, then we think that automation is inevitably going to crush democracy; there's absolutely nothing we can do. That was never our argument. We can do something about it if we get everything right. Our argument is, it's going to be incredibly hard to do all of those things. And we're just not actually understanding how hard it is if we're going to have a chance of doing that. They are the ones who believe in inevitability. They say, "Technological progress only ever has good political effects. Leave it to us. Leave it to the people in Silicon Valley. There will be some solution they will pull out of a hat. Perhaps it's UBI. Perhaps it's everybody have a job. Perhaps it's both at the same time. Don't worry about it; nothing could possibly go wrong." I'm a little afraid that with them at the helm, things might just go wrong.

John Donovan:

Okay. So, let's go to some audience questions. It's very front row.

Female Speaker:

My name is Leila.

John Donovan:

Thanks.

Female Speaker:

You also have said that -- and pointed out that in Europe, Margaret Vessayer [spelled phonetically] is fighting Google, and Facebook, and all of these things.

00:55:04

Do you think the -- that it's actually a problem within the U.S. and not, rather, like, all democracies that automation might crash? Like, it's just going to exacerbate U.S. political system rather than a general -- like, automation is going to crash --

John Donovan:

Okay.

Female Speaker:
-- all democracy?

John Donovan:
That's a great -- by the way, that's a model question. Thank you. That was really well done. And I think that's really more directed --

[applause]

-- to the side arguing for the motion.

Ian Bremmer:
I think it's interesting.

John Donovan:
Ian Bremmer.

Ian Bremmer:
I think the one industrial democracy that is facing much less challenge on this front is Japan. No immigration, population shrinking very fast, incredibly homogeneous. So, their willingness to go through globalization and the disruption of jobs hasn't caused much of a problem for them. The society is also -- because it's so homogeneous -- much more supportive of the big institutions, the business CEOs, their associations, the media, and the liberal democratic party.

00:56:02

It's kind of a single party democracy. But you know, that sort of system I don't see evolving or existing in the United States or Europe in the course of the next 20 or 30 years. The sclerosis is far too entrenched. Which means that for the purpose of time of this -- the framework of this debate, I actually think Japan is the exception that proves the rule as opposed to the model that we should all aspire to.

John Donovan:
The other side has a chance to respond.

Andrew Keen:
I would just say on this -- you know, Ian has written off Europe. I think that's a big mistake. I think the real innovation now -- and we've all fetishized innovation here -- the real innovation, when it comes to managing this technological revolution, is coming from Europe. It's coming on their -- the introduction of the general data protection regulation, which came out this month, which protects our privacy. It's coming with the challenge to monopolies. It's coming with forcing these big tech platforms to be accountable.

00:57:03

It will eventually arrive in America. You know, there's a famous Churchill quote about Americans; they always get it wrong, and eventually they get it right. And the same is true when it comes to tech. We take it for granted that America is the leader in innovation. It is in business terms, but it isn't in political terms. And America has much to learn from Europe. And I think it's very wrong to write Europe off.

[applause]

John Donovan:
Right down in front here.

Male Speaker:
Yes. Hi, my name is Doug. So, Andrew, I need you to save me here. I find Ian's argument compelling and I voted for your side. So, my question is, I believe you also --

John Donovan:
You mean Andrew is -- Andrew might be losing you?

Male Speaker:
Yes.

John Donovan:
Okay. Andrew --

Male Speaker:
So, I need him to save me.

John Donovan:
The stakes are high.

Andrew Keen:
Well, then, ask Alina. Don't ask me.

Male Speaker:
Or Alina. Well --

[laughter]

-- or either of you. I'm a big believer in personal agency as well. And I think -- so, how do we light a fire under the people in order to have them advocate for the solutions you were just elucidating?

Alina Polyakova:

Well, I think it's already happening. You see lots of people using social media to organize, to mobilize.

00:58:03

You know, if you want to use a political example, I mentioned the Parkland students in Florida. They did get some political and policy outcomes. That's a really minor example. The Women's March in Washington, D.C. The so-called resistance movement against our current political system. These are all things that are happening now and they're happening not despite, but because of the availabilities of these new technologies. And I'm not -- we're not even getting to the realm of automation yet, because this is just -- you know, Twitter and Facebook were founded 10 years ago, right? And if you -- nobody knew what the hell Twitter was for 10 years ago. And this is why we don't --

Male Speaker:

We still don't, by the way.

Alina Polyakova:

Well --

Male Speaker:

Yeah.

Alina Polyakova:

We have some thoughts. That -- we did start a couple of revolutions around the world. But we don't know what is going to come in 10 years from where are today. And that's the bigger point here.

John Donvan:

Yascha Mounk.

Yascha Mounk:

I'm really enjoying this trip down memory lane to a time when, you know, Twitter and Facebook was going to cause democratic revolutions all around the world, and it didn't. Caused the current president to win the 2016 election to allow foreign adversaries to influence our politics.

00:59:02

It's a lovely world but it's unfortunately not the world in which we live. We have seen how much technology empowers some of the most radical voices in our society, some of the most hateful voices in our societies. And we're also seeing the kinds of ways in which it's empowering authoritarian regimes --

Andrew Keen:
But what's that got to do with automation?

Yascha Mounk:
-- who now find it much easier to track -- look, it's to do with digital technology and the kind of automated --

Andrew Keen:
You're tarring -- you're tarring -- you're tarring technology as being bad. And you're saying because automation is technology is must be bad too. Those two things aren't connected.

Alina Polyakova:
Sounds very much like a lot of --

Yascha Mounk:
Well, you don't think that some of the bot attacks by different Russian sources were automated?

Andrew Keen:
So, you're suggesting that automation will crash democracy because of Putin's bots.

Yascha Mounk:
First of all, I was responding to --

Andrew Keen:
I mean isn't the argument about -- isn't the core argument here on both sides -- and we're arguing different things here -- but that you fear that automation will create mass unemployment which will create angry people which will destroy democracy.

01:00:05

We're arguing that isn't going to be the case.

Yascha Mounk:
First of all --

Andrew Keen:
It's got nothing to do with Putin's bots.

Yascha Mounk:
Can -- if I'm going to respond can I respond?

Andrew Keen:

Okay. Yeah. Absolutely.

Yascha Mounk:

First of all, I was responding to your debate partner who was telling us that Twitter and Facebook are somehow going to usher in a society that's forever democratic. And I was pointing out why I believe that that is naïve. Secondly, yes there are forms of automation that are connected to the rise of social media and yes, they have already helped to undermine our democracies in some key ways. That's not the core of our argument. The core of our argument is about the effect of mass unemployment and the kind of redistributed demands it's going to have on both popular anger that leads to the rise of far-right populism and elite attitudes which leads to people being very concerned about staying in a democratic system that requires them to give up more and more of their wealth.

John Donovan:

Okay. Audience member Doug, thank you for that question. It got us to a very interesting place. Way in the back there.

Male Speaker:

Hi. My name is Sam. I'm curious to hear more about the role of regulation in thinking about do you feel that regulation is something that can usher forward democracy or is it actually an impediment to the ability for technology to move forward?

01:01:10

John Donovan:

Regulation of -- can you be specific to land it again in the context of the motion?

Male Speaker:

I think in the way that we think about regulation of technology, regulation of automation. Thinking about Uber. Self-driving cars. What role do you see the government playing. And is that something that will continue to keep democracy driving or shut down technology?

John Donovan:

Ian, you're nodding that you'd like to take the question?

Ian Bremmer:

Sure, because I think it's a very important question. Look, the -- I think that these technology companies, both in terms of the wealth they drive as well as the transformational impact they have on society, are in a sense the most strategic companies that we have. And yet by their nature they're also the most resistant to regulation, not just because the government doesn't understand them and can't employ the people that would understand. They're so fast moving. But also, the culture in Silicon Valley which is much more libertarian, much more -- just all about the people.

01:02:01

We want to engage directly. Government's of no use. You know, we're creating a new society. All of that. Where again in China -- and I don't think China is a red herring. I think China's critical. Their most important strategic companies are the ones that are not just regulated. Right? They don't have rule of law. They're becoming natural monopolies, both in China and proactively. In the 80s and the 70s the most important strategic companies in the U.S. were companies like Lockheed which was the first company ever called too big to fail, Northrop, Raytheon. Those companies were step lock toe with the United States government. They wouldn't sell to companies that weren't American allies. They worked with the U.S. They were much more highly then regulated. They were strategic. Today the most important strategic companies for the U.S. are not just resistant to regulation but they're the -- they're ultimately undermining. And I think that's fundamentally problematic for liberal democracy.

John Donovan:

But Ian also I think part of one of the question, what if they -- what if regulation could be applied to these companies? What if they weren't so resistant?

01:03:00

Would regulation mitigate against the kinds of dangers that you and your partner are talking about? Yascha Mounk.

Yascha Mounk:

The problem here is what kind of world are we actually aiming to create? And there's two broad brushes of what that world might look like. The first is that even before we have all of this automation and basic human tasks are no longer needed in the economy we're going to create a whole world of fake jobs in which we make people -- give people sort of make believe jobs and that's going to somehow keep them happy. The second world is the world that Andrew Keen seems to like of universal basic income that says okay half of the country is no longer going to have productive employment. But because the state gives them enough money to play X-box and smoke weed every month they are somehow going to be happy with the political system.

John Donovan:

I think that's a really unfair characterization of what Andrew's argument has been.

Alina Polyakova:

It's very cheap.

John Donovan:

Really, I've got to stop you. He said nothing of the kind.

[laughter]

So, stop that.

Yascha Mounk:

Well, he did talk about universal basic income.

John Donovan:

As a possibility. But he's also talked about a far larger technological explosion of ideas, that basic income is sort of the stop-gap measure.

01:04:03

Andrew Keen:

Yeah.

John Donovan:

No, keep going. But --

Yascha Mounk:

Well but universal basic income is a thing that technologists also go to in this space. And I think it's important to actually think about what that would look like. For the whole period in which we've had democracy --

Ian Bremmer:

But this is -- how are you answering the regulation question?

Yascha Mounk:

-- we have had citizens who had independent sources of income which actually made them capable of not depending on the state. The idea that we're going to solve this political system through one form of regulation which is just giving the people the money in order to do that leads us to where we're at in a lot of the old rich states in which citizens depend on the good will of the government. And it so happens that none of those are democracies.

Ian Bremmer:

With due respect to my friend from Harvard let me answer your question which is that I absolutely believe that if we could effectively regulate the tech -- the big tech companies in the United States I would feel much better about the prospect of automation not crashing liberal democracy. I think the likelihood of that happening is effectively zero.

John Donovan:

What would be an example of regulation? I know we're getting very hypothetical but just, so people know what you mean by that.

01:05:01

Ian Bremmer:

I --

John Donovan:

Something to keep them from threatening democracy.

Ian Bremmer:

I'm talking about the kind of response that Alina was talking about in, you know, sort of you look at what great society actually did, you know, in the midst of the Great Depression. You're talking about, you know, sort of creating the Blue Eagle program which, you know, basically said here's what you're going to charge, and this is the wages you're going to have. And if not, we're going to actually sanction you. And we're going to boycott you. The U.S. government's going -- you created industrial policy around the most important companies in the U.S. I think the ability of our government to do that in the foreseeable future is effectively zero.

John Donovan:

I just want to share with the audience I just let this side have about three and a half minutes run which is fine, but now they're going to get a three and a half --

Alina Polyakova:

Yes.

John Donovan:

-- minute run if you want to use all of that. Go ahead.

Andrew Keen:

Well --

John Donovan:

Andrew Keen.

Andrew Keen:

I got this great book by Ian Bremmer called Us versus Them.

John Donovan:

It's a best-seller I think.

Andrew Keen:

It is a best-seller. Best best-seller. And Ian writes about rewriting the social contract. You know, I think Yascha as John kindly said is being unfair. Sure, universal basic income is a piece but there are many other pieces of this social contract.

01:06:07

The new kinds of transparency on data being architected, for example, in very progressive countries like Estonia. There are new ways of thinking about the working class which was once called the proletariat, the wage laboring class that Marx talked about. And now we call a proletariat. You haven't even talked about that. You haven't talked about the changing nature of work. But the reality is that the jobs aren't going to go away. But we're not going to have full-time jobs. We're going to be doing many jobs simultaneously. And it becomes the role of companies and governments and cultures to look after this new working culture. So, the social contract that Ian I think quite accurately describes in his book in the early part of the 21st century is the very kind of social contract that was architected in the middle to late part of the 19th century.

01:07:01

Not only by progressives, but indeed by people like Bismarck who actually pioneered it, was anything but an unrealistic, you know, revolutionary vision.

John Donovan:

And so, Alina, to the point of regulation I'm guessing your answer is yes, regulation would be one tool to --

Alina Polyakova:

Well, it's already happening. And again, it's happened in the past. Look, all technology is neutral basically. It can be used for good and it can be used for evil. And that's exactly what we've seen with Facebook, Twitter. And that's what we're seeing now with the automation development that Yascha mentioned. You know, if you told me 10 years ago that Twitter would be used to undermine the U.S. election process, I would have thought you were crazy. I would have thought you were equally crazy if you told me Twitter started massive democratic revolutions across the world, right? But it was used for two things. Radio was used by Hitler and it was used by FDR. The press -- the printing press -- was used to print the Bible and it was used to print completely, you know, crazy, paranoid conspiracy theories, right?

01:08:01

So, all of these things are used in -- for good and for evil. And the reality is, you keep going back to this point -- well, you know, universal income is not the answer. But you're, again, assuming there's going to be mass unemployment. That's simply not the trend we are seeing in western democracies. We are seeing a shortage of human labor, right? We need more workers, not less, right? And it's just one element of a much broader regulatory process. The governments are absolutely critical to this. And it's already happened in Europe. The European Union has released an artificial intelligence strategy with huge investment into R&D and AI. There's also a law in Germany called the Nansedege [spelled phonetically] law, that tries to regulate extremist speech in online platforms. And these are just two things, and there are many, many more

initiatives like this coming. And it just takes time for us to understand, as a society, how do we regulate and bring these new technologies to heel?

John Donovan:
Okay.

Alina Polyakova:
And it will take time.

[applause]

01:09:01

Quickly respond to what you heard?

Ian Bremmer:
I was just going to say, I certainly believe that technology is a megaphone and can be used for good or for bad, but we should not pretend that all technological systems are value neutral. I mean, when I think about what's happening with smartphones, and apps, and information technology that are coded by men with certain preferences, and beliefs, and views -- that is an entire technological system that is frankly destabilizing to liberal democracy. It's not that technology can be used equally for good or for bad, as lots of other technologies can. We have to recognize that the political system that surrounds the technology, that builds the technology, that facilitates technology actually determines an awful lot over whether or not that tech is going to be problematic or is going to be additive to the tech -- the society we live in.

John Donovan:
Okay. Another question.

Male Speaker:
This question is aimed at Ian Bremmer. You mentioned that China controls -- the Chinese government is controlling the automation process in China, whereas we have individual entrepreneurs controlling the innovation process or the automation process in the United States.

01:10:07

It appears that you have a preference for government controlling the automation process -- and that China is going to defeat the United States in this automation race, if you will. What makes you think that, and why do you have such a strong preference for the government controlling so much and so much heavy regulation of innovation in entrepreneurship?

Ian Bremmer:

That's a great question. And we'll -- I think we should bring Alina into it too, because she brought up something about her skepticism of the Chinese system. Most of the people that I know that really know AI are absolutely agnostic at this point as to whether or not the United States or China are at front. The Chinese have more and better data. The Americans have more and better scientists. Many people believe that big data, right now, is better than big scientists. But of course, a lot of the scientists are Chinese and some of them are starting to move back to China. I don't know. I absolutely do not have a preference for the Chinese system. Let's be very clear. I think the problem is that what you really want is a system where the government -- a democratic government -- is a fair arbiter, is an umpire, is a referee that actually allows the people to be able to take advantage.

01:11:16

That's what makes a social contract actually work. Here's why I think it's going to crash. It's because, in China, the state captures corporations. No rule of law, no independent judiciary -- all these big companies we're talking about doing all the automation, those are basically controlled by the state. In the United States, increasingly, corporations capture the state. We see that with the role of money and special interests. We see that with the electoral cycle. We see that with the way regulations are created. We see that with the swamp that is not being drained. And again, when you have one in six people in America that are saying that they would rather have military rule because they think the system is rigged -- and if they say that, you know it's more than one in six, because they're giving you answers that you want to hear. It's like, not many people want Trump.

01:12:00

Oh, my God. They all wanted Trump, right? That makes me feel that the system that we're talking about, that is a liberal democracy, is already starting to crash, and automation is going to make it worse.

John Donovan:

Let me take that to our optimists about democracy. That was a very gloomy portrayal of the present that you just heard from your opponent. What about that, Alina Polyakova?

Alina Polyakova:

I mean, the last point that Ian made, on the rise of populism, and the current election system we have in the United States, and the election of President Trump -- you know, democracies do -- just like business cycles -- come in waves. And we've seen populist waves in the past. And I think it's far, far too early to say that because we elected President Trump -- and yes, we did elect President Trump; the Russians did not elect President Trump -- that this signals some sort of complete, you know, dissemination of our democratic process. You know, you -- nobody expected President Obama either in 2008.

01:13:03

John Donovan:

But he wasn't just talking about the Trump election. He's talking about --

Alina Polyakova:

His last point.

John Donovan:

He's talking about a system of money in politics and corporate influence in government. The swamp already taking place --

Andrew Keen:

Yeah, but he didn't say --

Alina Polyakova:

Yeah.

John Donovan:

-- and taking root.

Andrew Keen:

But he didn't say anything about automation. He's talking about an America where --

[applause]

-- this is not a debate about the crisis of democracy.

John Donovan:

Well, to degree it's --

Andrew Keen:

I think no --

John Donovan:

You --

Andrew Keen:

No. It isn't. This is -- no, no --

John Donovan:

To a degree [inaudible] --

Andrew Keen:

The debate is about the relationship between automation --

John Donovan:

To a degree --

Andrew Keen:

-- and democracy.

John Donovan:

To a degree, your argument is that democracy is resilient, and that's why the threats --

Andrew Keen:

Yes.

John Donovan:

-- from the other side aren't working. And they're challenging your assertion that democracy is so resilient.

Andrew Keen:

Yeah. But it's still about automation. And the stuff that Ian --

John Donovan:

No. No. The word "Democracy" is in the resolution. I think it's a fair point for them to make.

Alina Polyakova:

All right.

Yascha Mounk:

May I come in on that?

Alina Polyakova:

I can follow-up on that.

John Donovan:

Sure. Yascha Mounk.

Yascha Mounk:

So, look, it's very simple --

Alina Polyakova:

[inaudible] to them.

Yascha Mounk:

You're saying that automation is going to pose some fundamental challenges, but it's all right because our political system is going to deal with it. We're saying that our political system is

already overwhelmed by some of its current challenges -- and that, yes, we could deal with automation in the right way if everything goes right.

01:14:08

But when you look at how embattled our democracies already are -- and we look, frankly, at who currently is the president of the United States -- we should have a healthy dose of skepticism about whether we're going to succeed in that.

John Donovan:

So --

[applause]

Ian Bremmer:

I feel good about Estonia. I think Estonia can probably handle more automation than the United States.

John Donovan:

So --

Ian Bremmer:

I really do.

John Donovan:

So, not in any sense taking sides on this --

Andrew Keen:

So, you agree with us.

John Donovan:

I just think that there's a coherent argument being made on this side that's relevant to the resolution.

Andrew Keen:

Yeah, but there's a crisis --

John Donovan:

And your response that it's not relevant is not relevant. So --

[laughter]

-- I think you should --

Andrew Keen:

The -- but you cannot conflate the crisis in America with this broad debate about the relationship between automation and democracy. Those are two separate conversations.

John Donovan:

Alina, what do you think on that?

Alina Polyakova:

Well, you know, fine. Let's take that point, even though I agree with Andrew that it is irrelevant -- about resilience. You know, there is a backlash coming, and technology is enabling it. Look at the Panama Papers, right?

01:15:01

This massive leak of information that happened -- that truly undermined the corruption scheme of some authoritarian regimes, including Russia -- and looks at the checks and balances of the United States that are currently happening, right? We do have an investigation going on in this country that's looking into corrupt -- potential corrupt practices, that's looking into Russian interference. So, the checks and balances are indeed working. People are mobilizing at the local level. More and more women are running in the congressional elections this year. More and more people are mobilizing. So, I don't know how you say that the -- you know, we're not resilient; that checks, and balances aren't working. They are working.

John Donovan:

Okay. So, they have --

[laughter]

-- refuted your point. And I want to take on -- take on their refutation.

Ian Bremmer:

Well -- go ahead. Okay. I would say -- look, I would say that the level of disenfranchisement in the West, which is clearly going to grow -- you are right now in the best economy the United States has had in well-over a decade, the best economy the world has had in over a decade.

01:16:00

And yet, we feel the extraordinary impact of all of this. So, I work with a lot of CEOs, right? A lot -- advise them around the United States and Europe. I will tell you that every single -- almost -- over 95 percent of them tell me that over the next 10 years, they think that they can make more money with fewer people. That is in every sector across the board. It's people making toothbrushes. It's people that are -- law firms, accounting firms. It's people in the financial industry. It's people -- big manufacturing, little manufacturing, you name it. And that is happening in an environment where the economy is doing really well -- when we are more

divided than we have ever been in my lifetime. That makes me feel when the recession hits, and when interest rates go up, and when suddenly, the huge tax-benefit that everyone gets because we got a great big giveaway suddenly gets squeezed and then the CEOs say we've got to lay off a bunch of people because we've been doing fine for a while, now we're not. I don't see that resilience. And that is the point at which I think that the Chinese which will have the largest economy in the world at that point have a very different system that is focused on ensuring that people get employment.

01:17:08

And is focused on ensuring there is civic nationalism controlled by the state while in the United States we're actually doing it on the basis of what our --

John Donovan:

Let me take it to Andrew Keen.

Andrew Keen:

Can I -- can I just respond? Because he keeps on bringing up and keeps on bringing up China. And he's talking about this endless narrative of why China is going to be more successful. They may be more advanced on AI. But let's look at the dark side of China. They're creating a digital Orwellianism, a truly big brother dystopia.

Yascha Mounk:

That's our point, surely.

Andrew Keen:

No, it isn't. Because they're not -- they're not destroying democracy. The point is you're saying they're going to become the model to destroy democracy. But the reality in China is that there will be new waves of unrest against a Chinese regime that has destroyed privacy, that rejects the very notions of individualism and autonomy.

01:18:00

And you're dismissing that. You assume that Chinese people are happy because they might have an extra car where their freedom is taken away. You're dismissing all that. You're suggesting that we only care about economic prosperity. And I think you're completely wrong.

John Donovan:

And Yascha Mounk, Andrew Keen said in his opening statement that you were dismissing just individual agency, that people can't make -- people can't make choices. They can't act. They can't become effective. Politically in their lives they can't make demands. He's just making the case in China he thinks that's what would happen. Is he right that you're just dismissing the individual agency of individual people?

Yascha Mounk:

We have individual agency but it's going to take a lot of agency to deal with those things. That is all part of a point about China. Of course, China has never been a democracy. But the ways in which these authoritarian regimes are using digital tools in order to precisely keep those legitimate expectations and hopes that yes most Chinese people also have down to control all of their citizens are frightful and they can absolutely be adopted by governments in our own countries as well.

01:19:02

And that goes to a second point to which Andrew Keen has given short shrift, which is that he says, "Well you guys are just pointing to Trump and everything else is fine." Look at the way in which authoritarian populism is already rising across lots of different countries in the world in which it has quashed democracy in Turkey and in Russia and which it is in danger of turning to dictatorship now in Poland and in Hungary. We've just seen a government in Italy which is a far-right populist government. So, the idea that this could not happen here, that the tools to quash democracy through digital control are somehow irrelevant to our societies is puzzling to me.

John Donovan:

We have time for one more question. Right in the center there. Please make it great.

Male Speaker:

To the extent that as consumers companies are all competing to give us the products and services that we want are these companies not delivering automation because we as democratic citizens are demanding it and that they're responding to that?

John Donovan:

I take it Ian --

Ian Bremmer:

Yes.

01:20:00

Of course. It's just like when food companies weren't properly regulated they gave us what we want which was as much fat, as much salt, as much sweet as humanly possible. We became the most obese nation in the world and the most Type II diabetes. If that's what you want for democracy -- I consider that crashing it.

John Donovan:

Would the other side like to respond?

Andrew Keen:

Well, the food example is a really good one. In the middle of the -- out of the industrial revolution you got exactly what Ian is talking about. But I don't remember, you know, when we go to our Whole Foods or high-quality food stores or restaurants around here that the food is that bad. The point is, is that narratives when you have technology that takes advantage of us as consumers or citizens we reshape it. We've done it with food. We've done it with transportation. We've done it with working conditions. And we will do it with automation.

John Donovan:

And that concludes round two of this Intelligence Squared US debate where our motion is "Automation will Crash Democracy." And now we move on to round three.

01:21:00

Round three is comprised of brief closing statements by each debater in turn. They will be two minutes each. And speaking first in support of the motion, Yascha Mounk, senior fellow at New America and author of *The People versus Democracy: Why our Freedom is in Danger and How to Save It*.

Yascha Mounk:

So, there is a crucial point on which we're actually agreed on both sides of this debate. And that is that in principle there are things we can do in order to deal with automation. If we put in place all the right regulations, if we find the new model for our society and for how people are going to have a sense of self-worth and a sense of real agency as citizens then we might actually be able to respond. But there's two big questions which are at the heart of which side you should vote on today. And they're first of all how likely it is that we'll get things just right in that kind of way and secondly under what kind of circumstances we are most likely to actually succeed in that?

01:22:05

Now if you listen to the other side of the debate the answers are pretty glib. They are you know what, we've dealt with all of this before. We already have the handbook. This is just another go-around on the same carousel. Just don't worry and things will turn out to be fine. The argument on our side of the debate is the opposite of that. It is to say that if technologists are right we are facing a different kind of automation. We are facing machines and robots that have general intelligence and will displace many more human beings. We are saying that in order to deal with that we actually have to reinvent in a fundamental way what our societies are going to look like, what our political model is going to look like, what our economy is going to look like. There's a famous line by the sociologist Barrington Moore who said, "No bourgeois, no democracy." In societies in which you didn't develop a middle class you didn't end up with functioning democratic systems.

01:23:03

Automation is imperiling the middle class. And only by taking radical action to shore up the middle class will we be able to stop automation from crashing democracy. Thank you very much.

John Donovan:

Thank you Yascha Mounk. And that is our resolution: Automation will crash democracy. And here making her closing statement against the motion, Alina Polyakova, fellow at the Brookings Institution and author of *The Dark Side of European Integration*.

Alina Polyakova:

So, what we've been arguing here is the very basic notion that democracy and automation are opposed to each other inherently naturally or profoundly, if you will. But actually, what we have confirmed is that what automation technology is in complete opposition to is not democracy but authoritarianism. Right? I grew up in the Soviet Union, probably the most oppressive regime that ever existed. And I can tell you that in the Soviet days people were incredibly inventive, how they used the very little technology they had to try to resist the authoritarian regime. Right?

01:24:07

To try to understand what democratic principles and ideals were. And by the 1970s and 1980s many Soviet citizens were actually huge believers in Western liberal democracy despite authoritarianism. And that's why the cold war ended at the end of the day. Now in Russia there's an ongoing battle where the Kremlin is trying to reinstate a very similar repressive system. And we're seeing a battle between technology and authoritarianism play out today. Right now, the Russian government is trying to actively shut down a very popular messaging service called Telegram. And what we're seeing is the technology is pushing back because this messaging service has been used to mobilize mass protests in Russia against the regime despite great, great odds. So, in fact what we're seeing is that technology is empowering people across the world.

01:25:00

And yes, it can be used by authoritarian regimes for evil or corrupt democratic regimes for evil, but at the end of the day it is an absolutely critical tool for the flowering and continued democratization of society. And in fact, I will tell you that your argument that China is the exception to the rule perhaps -- well, there's a growing middle class in China. And history tells us that democratic revolutions happen in places where there's a large middle class. So, I think in very near-term next generation may have democratic revolution in China as well. Thank you.

[applause]

John Donovan:

Thank you, Alina -- thank you, Alina Polyakova. Our next speaker will make his closing statement in support of the motion. Ian Bremmer, president of Eurasia Group and author of "Us v. Them: The Failure of Globalism."

Ian Bremmer:

So, like Andrew, I'm a big fan of Whole Foods. A great place to get food -- that does not make me feel better about the idea that food for humanity is going to be wonderful.

01:26:01

Automation -- I'm sure that a bunch of us in this room are going to do really, really well. That does -- and we will have access to great things in automated society. That does not mean that liberal democracy will be open for everyone. We did use the word "profoundly" several times. There was one word that I noticed that Andrew used several times. It was "fetishized." Now --

[laughter]

-- yes. But I wasn't meaning that way. I find that that word is used very frequently by technologists because they're the ones coming up with the new religion. They're the ones that believe that they are going to be able to create a new great society, that we will all do so much better than because so much wealth is going to be generated. They call it a fourth Industrial Revolution, because it's going to be even bigger and greater than the first, the second, the third Industrial Revolution. You know what? That's their book. Just like Mark Zuckerberg. Who knew it was going to be so divisive? He's talking his book. The reality is they don't know. I don't trust them when they talk their book -- not when so many people tell me jobs are going away. You know there was an Industrial Revolution that didn't lead to more jobs?

01:27:02

Not for human beings; for horses. We used to have 10 times as many horses in the 19th century -- the 20th century. You don't need them anymore because automation made them irrelevant. Now you've got one-tenth -- it's very stable. They're used for food and for entertainment. I'm funny. I don't know about you guys, right?

[laughter]

The food option is not great. I don't think that's where we're going, but I am absolutely clear that if this is a -- I don't see why AI gets to the point where there's just about as smart as human beings, they can do just about as much, and then it stops. If it keeps going, there's no reason why what happened to horses doesn't start to happen with a whole bunch of people that we don't bother to educate properly, that we don't give the opportunity to become more than they are today. And then, liberal democracy, as system, has crashed. Thank you very much.

[applause]

John Donovan:
Thank you, Ian Bremmer.

[applause]

The motion is Automation Will Crash Democracy. And here to make his closing statement against the motion, Andrew Keen, Internet entrepreneur and author of the bestselling "How to Fix the Future."

01:28:03

Andrew Keen:
Thank you. So, I don't know what the horses have to do with it, Ian. But --

[laughter]

-- or Whole Foods -- oh, I brought up Whole Foods. So, yeah, you're right. I do use the word "fetishize." Let me summarize with my ultimate fetishization -- which is all of us as human beings. I suggested that this assembly itself is a manifestation of democracy. We think for ourselves; we're autonomous. We vote. You will vote -- of course, for us, I hope. The point is that I am fetishizing human beings, as we've always done, to prioritize what we care about. We will shape automation. You're voting on this notion of automation being this all-consuming thing that will crash democracy -- democracy being the human thing in itself, the thing that protects our individualism, our freedom.

01:29:03

Ian has suggested that somehow, the Chinese model will work because everyone wants to be rich and no one cares about freedom. I think the reverse is true. I think that the AI revolution actually might re-vitalize. I'm not sure; there's nothing inevitable about this. We've never talked about perfect solutions. Human history is always messy. We break things, and then we fix them, and the fixes themselves require fixes. Nothing will be solved, ultimately. There is no end of history. There is no final goal here that we're to arrive at. But this idea that automation -- our latest, new new thing from Silicon Valley -- automation, artificial intelligence, will crash democracy is wrong, because it forgets about us. It forgets about human beings, who more than anything else value their freedom, value their community.

01:30:04

And more than anything else -- value passing on that community to their children. So, I think automation will not crash democracy because of us human beings, and I urge you to vote for our side. Thank you.

[applause]

John Donovan:

Thank you, Andrew Keen. And that concludes closing statements and the third round of Intelligence Squared U.S. debate.

[applause]

I just wanted to say a couple of things. First of all, our goal is to raise the level of public discourse, and to be insightful, and interesting, and civil at the same time. And the four of you were -- you just made that conversation so, so very interesting, taking us to new places, but I also really just want to congratulate the four of you for the spirit in which you argued with each other. There's such a thing as good argument. This was great argument. So, thank you very much.

[applause]

While we're waiting for the vote, I just wanted to have one brief conversation with our debaters. Again, given the degree to which you all argued in good faith with one another, I'm wondering -- who actually saw an enormous amount of common ground here?

01:31:08

Do you think there was a lot of overlap? And --

Male Speaker:

Yeah.

John Donovan:

I mean, where would you say, Ian, you actually saw your opponents had some good points and maybe didn't disagree with you.

Ian Bremmer:

Oh, no. Look -- the fact that, actually, there are a lot of ways to try to address this issue, right, and that we want to try them. And especially the idea that human beings give it our best, and we are -- the argument right at the end, that, you know, ultimately, you believe in human beings. Yeah. There's no question. I think the structures can be bad, but the people ultimately want to do the right thing here.

John Donovan:

And Alina? From -- what did you hear from the other side? I -- you just don't share their pessimism that they have, but -- maybe some of the premises?

Alina Polyakova:

Well, no. I mean, I think the reality is that the challenges that automation presents to all of our economies are significant -- or profound. So, this kind of restructuring -- the adjustment period is going to be a huge challenge. There's no question about that.

01:32:04

And we may see a lot of jobs lost, and we may see a lot of jobs created. And those may not match up. And we just don't know. And I think what Ian pointed to -- this notion of rewriting the social contract -- is the key here.

John Donovan:

Yascha, what about you?

Yascha Mounk:

Well, and [unintelligible] made implicitly, and not quite explicitly, is that we really don't know what form automation is going to take, right? And that's sort of the premise that I use for all of my remarks. But I do think that if we get a machine that basically has general human intelligence, it's going to transform our societies in very scary and foundational ways. But I don't know if that is going to happen. I don't know if AI is going to get to a point -- certainly, in our lifetimes -- where it can substitute for, basically, all the tasks that somebody with an IQ of 90 or 95 currently does. And if that's not the shape that automation is going to take, then I think it will look like much more like the former waves of automation that we've seen in the 19th century and so on. It's quite a lot more manageable.

John Donovan:

[affirmative], Andrew?

Andrew Keen:

Well, I thought their argument about the general level of anger in society is absolutely right.

01:33:04

It's something that's deeply troubling. And I think it was Ian's point that when you -- if AI, as it will inevitably unfold and reshape society, and take away jobs, and change many of our assumptions about how we live and how our economy works. If that sort of anger, that deeply rooted anger in our culture -- which has nothing to do with technology or automation, but if that is set on fire by AI, then I think this general forest fire, this terrible conflagration that you're worrying us about, I think you're right. But I think the challenge then is addressing the issue of anger and trying to figure out why often people are so angry when there really isn't any reason for them to be so.

Yascha Mounk:

Please join us for the next Intelligence Squared debate which he and I vote -- argue against this motion.

[laughter]

01:34:00

John Donovan:

No, I mean it's great to see that there's actually a significant amount of common ground, but you were here to argue with each other and that's what you've done. I now have the final results. Again, I want to make clear it's the difference between the first and the second vote that determines who is our winner. On the motion "Automation will Crash Democracy," before the debate in polling the live audience here at Hunter College in New York City, 25 percent agreed that automation would crash democracy, 49 percent disagreed, 26 percent were undecided. Those are the first results. Again, it's the difference between the first results and the ones I'm about to announce that determines our winner. So, the team arguing for the motion. Their first vote was 25 percent the second vote was 45 percent. They pulled up 20 percentage points. That is the number to beat. The team arguing against the motion. Their first vote was 49 percent, their second vote was 47 percent. They lost two percentage points. That means our live audience has given the debate to the other side. Our winners tonight, the team arguing in favor of the motion, "Automation will Crash Democracy." But remember, this debate is not over yet.

01:35:02

We have audiences tuning in online, on public radio, and on our podcast. They still have time to vote and you can see those results which are going on at IQ2us.org. So, check those out. Everyone here, thank you so much. I'm John Donovan. Thanks, from Intelligence Squared US. We'll see you next time.

[applause]

[end of transcript]

This is a rough transcript. Please excuse any errors.