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Dr. Richard Haass
Author and President Emeritus
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Webinar

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Introduction

President Barbara Van Allen

Good afternoon and welcome to the 726th meeting of The Economic Club of New York. I'm Barbara Van Allen, President and CEO of the Club. The Economic Club of New York is known as the nation's leading nonpartisan forum for discussions on economic, social, and political issues. We've had more than 1,000 prominent guests appear before the Club over more than the last century and have established a strong tradition of excellence, which continues up to today.

I'd like to extend a warm welcome to the students joining us from Baruch College, Fordham University, Mercy University, and the CUNY Graduate Center, as well as members of our largest-ever Class of 2023 Fellows – a select group of next-gen business thought leaders. We also have put up on the website, for those members that are online, applications for our 2024 Fellows program. So you can now pick those up and hopefully sponsor a fellow for next year.

Today, I'm really honored to welcome our special guest, Dr. Richard Haass. Richard is President Emeritus of the nonpartisan Council on Foreign Relations, having served as CFR's President for nearly 20 years. He's also Senior Counselor with Centerview Partners, an international investment banking advisory firm.

A veteran diplomat and policymaker, he served in the Pentagon, the State Department, and the White House, under four presidents – Democrat and Republican alike. A recipient of the Presidential Citizens Medal, the State Department’s Distinguished Honor Award and the Tipperary International Peace Award. He’s the author or editor of numerous books.

Today, as part of our Authors Series, we’re here to discuss his latest book, *The Bill of Obligations: The Ten Habits of Good Citizens*, a provocative guide to how we must re-envision citizenship if American democracy is to survive.

The format today will be a conversation. We’re honored to have Michelle Caruso-Cabrera, CEO of MCC Productions, the media production company she founded in 2018, and a contributor to CNBC and a member of both The Economic Club of New York and CFR, joining us today. Time permitting, they will take questions from those submitted in the chat box if you have any. And as a reminder, the conversation is on the record and we do have media on the line. So without further ado, I’m happy to pass this over to you, Michelle.

Conversation with Dr. Richard Haass

MICHELLE CARUSO-CABRERA: Thank you very much, Barbara. It’s great to be here.

Thanks everyone for joining us. An honor to do this discussion with you, Richard, who I've known through the Council on Foreign Relations for a long time. I want to talk about your book. That's why you're here, to talk about your book. But first, of course, you're a longtime policy watcher, a longtime Washington insider – let's describe you as that.

What do you make of the events over the weekend that we averted a government shutdown for now?

DR. RICHARD HAASS: Well, the good news, first of all, let me say it's good to be with you, good to be at the Economic Club. I'm not sure if 726 is my lucky number, but I'm glad to be that event. Look, the good news over the weekend is that the shutdown was averted. The bad news is we ever got to the point, that we have to deal with shutdowns or the threats of shutdowns in the first place. And it was averted, the problem wasn't resolved. It's going to return in 45 days. And it's reflective of a structural systemic problem, more than anything else within the Republican party. So, again, it's a sigh of relief, but it's not much more than that, Michelle.

MICHELLE CARUSO-CABRERA: We're going to see this another day, it seems. So let's get to your book.

DR. RICHARD HAASS: I actually think now there's a really interesting opportunity, because this got averted – to use your word – through a rare degree of cross-party

cooperation. Essentially you had Democrats and Republicans joining together so the radical or extremist faction in the Republican party was isolated. If there's a challenge to Speaker McCarthy – let me just float the notion that Democrats and Republicans may want to come together for keeping Speaker McCarthy in his office, and there may be again a way to come up with some ability to govern together. So that may sound ambitious, but I don't think that's an impossibility, to build on what happened over the weekend.

MICHELLE CARUSO-CABRERA: So you're envisioning the possibility that Democrats could vote for McCarthy to be Speaker through this vote. Is that how you're thinking it could play out?

DR. RICHARD HAASS: Absolutely. Look, Hakeem Jeffries is not going to become Speaker. We know who has the majority in this Congress. So the real question is could Democrats and Republicans essentially find a way to work together? And it would obviously be conditional, some kind of, that he would be Speaker under a certain understanding about how the institution would run or perhaps some policy issues. I simply put that out there. Again, we had a rare moment in Washington of cross-party cooperation, and so we don't want to come back to where we were every 45 days. So the question I have is can we maybe build on that?

MICHELLE CARUSO-CABRERA: Fingers crossed. So, you are a foreign policy guy, but you have written now a book about the United States, *The Bill of Obligations*. We're all familiar with the Bill of Rights. Your book is *The Bill of Obligations*. Why write a book about the United States right now?

DR. RICHARD HAASS: Well, as you say I am a foreign policy guy. I plead guilty. If you're worried about national security, though, the biggest threat – I would argue – to America's national security right now does not emanate from China or Russia, North Korea, Iran, or the climate, as significant as all those threats are. The most significant threat is internal. Whether we are going to be so dysfunctional that we can't put into place or allocate the resources to deal with our challenges, put into place the policies to deal with our challenges. Or worse yet, we're so divided that we're distracted and even come to significant levels of significant violence.

And in all those scenarios, we are going to be unable to deal with any of our external challenges. Our alliances and our partnerships will undergo crisis. Our foes will see opportunity. So again, you know, the last 75 years, which I think has been a remarkable run of history – not perfect, but remarkable by any comparison – happened because the United States was able and willing to play a consistent outsized role in the world.

The greatest threat to our ability and will to playing that role now are our domestic

divisions. So, yes, I think this is the biggest national security crisis we have, which is why a foreign policy guy – as you put me – came to write a book about American democracy.

MICHELLE CARUSO-CABRERA: So it's called *The Bill of Obligations*, which I assume is the other side of the coin of the Bill of Rights. Explain the thinking behind that.

DR. RICHARD HAASS: You got it. It wasn't subtle. Subtlety is never a good idea when it comes to books or book titles. Yes, citizenship is a coin with two sides – rights and obligations. Rights are central to the American experience. The Bill of Rights were necessary in order to get the ratification of the Constitution through. But as we've seen, rights alone do not a democracy make. Rights inevitably come into conflict, whether it's debates, say about abortion, a women's right to choose versus the rights of the unborn, someone's right to bear arms versus someone else's right to public safety. I could go through a long list. The question is what do you do when rights inevitably come into conflict? How do you avoid gridlock, like we often see in Washington? Or worse yet, how do you avoid violence?

So, just to be clear, I'm not suggesting less emphasis on rights. Rights are essential to the reality of democracy, Michelle, as you know. I'm simply saying that we've lost sight of obligations. Obligations that you and I have to one another, that anybody on this

Zoom has to the others on this Zoom, and the obligations all of us have to this country of ours. If American democracy is going to survive, if it's going to thrive, even better, it's only going to happen if we re-balance the citizenship coin. And rather than having an exclusive focus on rights, we introduce an equal focus on obligations.

MICHELLE CARUSO-CABRERA: Be informed, get involved, stay open to compromise, remain civil, reject violence, value norms, promote the common good, respect government service, support the teaching of civics, put country first. Which of those are the most important obligations?

DR. RICHARD HAASS: Well, if Thomas Jefferson could have joined us today – unfortunately I gathered he was busy – he would have chosen to be informed. It's the reason I made it the first. More than anything else, being informed is the foundation for citizenship. We want citizens to be involved, but we want them to be involved in an informed way. We're a representative democracy. We have to hold those with political authority to account. Again, it requires an informed citizenry to do that. So I put a great emphasis on being informed and being involved. Democracy is not a spectator sport. Lots of the obligations you mentioned are behavioral – if you will – attitudes, norms and so forth.

Putting country before party or a person – it's actually sad that I had to mention that.

But, yes, it's essential, again as a perspective. And if you think about it, you know, we could all think of a few examples of those who do, but we can also think of quite a few examples of those who do not.

My own two personal favorites, though, come just before that. One is to get civics in our schools. We are failing to explain why democracy is valuable and what it requires of its citizens. And we risk losing the benefits of our democracy if we don't make the case for it. School is not the only place, but I would argue it might be the best place to make the case for American democracy.

And then public service, very much you and I, actually I'll say I am of a generation that heard JFK's call – ask not what your country can do for you, what you can do for your country. And I believe public service is essential to build connections between Americans and their country but also to build connections between Americans and other Americans.

We now lead such separate lives. You know, people are in this or that church, this or that zip code. They're on this or that social media site. And increasingly, Americans don't have common experiences. So we're not learning our heritage. We're not picking up the DNA of democracy in our schools. And then we lead separate lives. So why should it surprise anybody that the fabric of this society is increasingly being torn. So,

yes, I want to try to help fix that.

MICHELLE CARUSO-CABRERA: What do you think is the most difficult to achieve?

DR. RICHARD HAASS: That's interesting. They're all difficult. It's ironic that being informed is difficult. You would think it would be easy where, you know, you can go on the Google machine or you've got more stations than you and I can count. On the other hand, that's the part that makes it so difficult. We're swimming, not just in information, we're swimming in misinformation. So that's become very difficult.

We're probably getting some agreement, particularly in high schools as to what should be taught in the way of civics. Education has gotten not just politicized, but even weaponized. So I am many things, but I am not naive. But I think getting approval or consensus around that will be difficult. So those are two that strike me as important, but difficult.

MICHELLE CARUSO-CABRERA: Being a longtime journalist, the being informed part, when I see how there used to be this notion and this goal of objective journalism in the United States, which was pretty unique to the U.S. actually. And how that is just slipping away seems to me to be something that makes that particularly difficult.

DR. RICHARD HAASS: Yes, there used to be a church-state relationship between the editorial page and the news pages. That wall has broken down in many cases. That's a problem. But I think the bigger problem is many places now don't even go through the motions of pretending to be objective. They just simply create; they project their realities. And the problem is we live in an era of what I would call narrow-casting. I grew up with broadcasting. You had a couple of national networks and so forth.

But now with cable, with satellite radio, and then with social media, you essentially have tens of thousands of places that people can go to for "information." There's no fact-checking. There's no vetting. There's no quality control of any sort. So it's a dangerous moment because democracy doesn't take place in a vacuum, it takes place in a context. And again, it's one of the great contradictions of our age where people on this planet have greater access to better information and more of it than at any other time in human history, yet what they seem to have is more access to misinformation than at any time in human history.

MICHELLE CARUSO-CABRERA: You are doing now, you used to be the head of the Council on Foreign Relations for 20+ years, and now you are dedicating yourself to, I believe obligation #9, correct? Helping to expand the teaching of civics in the United States. Tell me more about those efforts.

DR. RICHARD HAASS: Yes, that's a big part, because a lot of what I call for in this book is going to require individuals to change their behaviors, to bother to vote, to get informed, to rule out violence, to be open to compromise. Those are things that we can promote, religious authorities can promote, parents can promote, teachers can promote. But there are certain things that actually lend themselves to policy. And the two that really lend themselves to policy, one I mentioned before, public service, federal government, state governments, city governments can put into place various programs for public service. And just the other day, the White House announced this new Climate Corps. The state of California has innovated all sorts of public service programs. So that's one set.

Civics, though, is the one where I think it's the most important, that needs the most help. I've been looking at what colleges and universities could do as well as what high schools and middle schools can do. Colleges and universities have to kind of go one-sies. They're pretty independent, except where you have state systems. So I am talking to some governors where there are state systems. But I'm talking mainly to individual presidents of universities. The good news, by the way, is one of the best and most prestigious in the country and the world, Stanford, is introducing a course this winter. For the first time, every freshman at Stanford is going to be required to take a course during the winter term on civics. I think that is fantastic. I'm hoping other schools follow suit.

MICHELLE CARUSO-CABRERA: What does that curriculum look like, Richard? Is that basic stuff like we used to learn?

DR. RICHARD HAASS: Parts of it are. I mean there's things like you read the Constitution and you read excerpts from the Federalist Papers, and you might read the odd Supreme Court decision. And there's some debate, obviously, over that. They had a trial experience with some of the freshman last year. They're tweaking more in various places. And I'm working with other schools to talk about exactly your question. What is an adequate curriculum? And it gets tough, and selectivity, what is it you teach? What is it you don't? And also when it comes to the history parts. That obviously gets, that's the most contentious. And what I've been thinking of is to teach it in certain ways, not that you teach a history, but you teach the basics that can't be disputed and then you expose students to various schools or interpretations of the history.

But this is, look, this is a work in progress at the college and university level. This week, just to give you an example, I'm going to Rutgers, and I'll spend a day there this week. And later this fall, I'll be at Arizona State University. I'll be at Pepperdine. So I'm on the road talking about this in schools and working with the school authorities wherever they're open to it.

High school level is more complicated. It's more political, as you would expect. It's less

difficult when it comes to charter schools, private schools, parochial schools and so forth. More complicated with public schools, but ultimately we've got to get to public schools. That's where the numbers are. I don't think, indeed I know there will not be a national approach to this. What I think, though, there's a decent chance that you can get certain governors or mayors to buy into this.

And so I've started those conversations and what I'm hoping is, almost in the spirit of Justice Brandeis, certain states can be laboratories of democracy. In this case, certain states will be laboratories of civics education and that will have a knock-on effect. But ultimately, we've got to get to the point where there's enormous similarity between what is taught in California and Arkansas and Ohio and Maine, because otherwise it defeats the purpose. The whole is to create a sense of citizenship of our national idea. This was a country founded on an idea.

I mean the President gave a very powerful speech the other day in Arizona, at an institution associated with John McCain. And he reminded people that that was the founding of this country, based on certain principles and ideas. So ultimately I'm hoping that a bottom-up state, you know, approach to elementary and high school education, that the similarities outweigh the differences. We want to create a sense of a national identity here.

MICHELE CARUSO-CABRERA: I want to remind everybody who is watching that they can put questions into the chat, and we have a question, Richard. Women have yet to be written into the Constitution protected equally under the law. The 28th Amendment has satisfied all Article 5 requirements. As a woman, I want to meet my obligations for the democracy, but I also expect protection under the law. Any comments on this contradiction?

DR. RICHARD HAASS: Well, formally women have not been written in through “Equal Rights Amendment”, but women were written in to get the right to vote. It was one of the expansions of the franchise, one of the several we’ve had in American history. And I would just say, as an aside, it’s one of the examples of how democracy shows an ability to evolve, which I would argue is one of its strengths. And then women obviously have full access to the legal system and the rest whenever they feel they’ve been discriminated against.

Indeed, even if you had something like an Equal Rights Amendment written into law, that wouldn’t solve the problem. There would still be cases where individual women felt they had been discriminated against for one reason or another, in one way or another. So they would still have to essentially challenge certain behaviors, certain policies in the courts or in other domains in American life. So amendments are rarely solutions.

We saw it with various amendments extending the right to vote. Then you had poll taxes or you had other discrimination. Indeed today, the fight they're having about access to voting in various states, what's called access to democracy. So even though you have amendments on the book, amendments set rules, yes, but they still have to be, you know, they don't solve the problem.

MICHELLE CARUSO-CABRERA: The questioner has already come back and said, but we would have standing in the Constitution.

DR. RICHARD HAASS: Women have standing in the courts and women have standing to vote in the Constitution. And wherever, again, individual women or women as a class feel they've been discriminated against, they have recourse.

MICHELLE CARUSO-CABRERA: If we could, please bring in your questions. Because Richard has spent a lot of time on foreign policy, as I say, the foreign policy guy, we'd like to ask some foreign policy questions. What do you think about the current foreign policy, U.S. policy towards China? Is it clear to you? You know, a lot of the Chinese call it Trump 2.0 because it's been remarkably consistent, in fact even harsher than perhaps what they had expected. Is it working? Is it the right approach? What do you think?

DR. RICHARD HAASS: Well, I think those who call it Trump 2.0 have something of a

point. There's a lot of similarity. I'm hard-pressed, Michelle, to draw sharp distinctions between the two. U.S. policy towards China has gotten tougher. And I think what it reflects is a real disillusionment across the political spectrum here with the evolution of China.

The hope was, over the last 20 years, that bringing China into various institutions, engaging with them diplomatically would lead to a China that was more open politically at home, more market-oriented economically, more moderate in its foreign policy. None of those things has come to pass. So there has been a growing concern about not just China's growing power, but its behavior at home and abroad. So I think that's just simply a fact of life.

There's elements of this administration's policy I like. I like the closer collaboration with partners and allies in what's now called the Indo-Pacific, above all with Japan, Australia, the Republic of Korea, South Korea, to some extent Taiwan, to some extent India. I think all that is healthy. I'm confused about our economic policy towards China. The Secretary of the Treasury speaks about a high fence and a small yard. The small yard at times looks pretty big. It's not quite clear whether we're simply trying to stop China from using certain types of access to technologies, to put them into use militarily or in the intelligence realm, or are we actually trying to slow China's economic rise full stop. So I think there's confusion on that issue, which is an issue of concern.

The good news also is that there's more diplomatic engagement with China. I thought we made a mistake when we cancelled the Secretary of State's, the planned trip to China in the wake of the balloon incident. When there's problems, that's when I think you need diplomacy even more. I don't see not having diplomacy as a sanction. I don't understand why we haven't gotten rid of some of the Trump tariffs. I don't think they made sense or they're working. If anything, they're hurting American consumers. I wish we were doing a little bit more to help Taiwan.

So I can disagree with specifics and some areas I simply find confusing. But I think the most important positive, since I want to be positive here, is where we are now associating much more closely with a bunch of partners and allies. And that's in many ways the great comparative advantage of American foreign policy. We have allies and partners to work with be it in Europe against, say Russia, or around the world to help manage the rise of China.

MICHELLE CARUSO-CABRERA: A question has come in related to China. I'm sure you're familiar with the term, Thucydides Trap. Are the U.S. and China involuntary participants in one right now?

DR. RICHARD HAASS: The short answer is no.

MICHELLE CARUSO-CABRERA: Do you want to define it for us? Can you define...

DR. RICHARD HAASS: This comes from the idea, ancient Greece and the idea that a rising power and the paramount power of the day, the status quo power, are inevitably on a trajectory of collision, that there's simply not enough room on the stage for both. So this idea has been advanced in the case of the United States as the major power of the day, China as the major rising power. I just don't buy that for a second. I find this, quite honestly, truly unpersuasive analysis or history.

Now, let me just make a larger point. I've worked for four presidents, Democrat and Republican. I've been involved in more meetings than I can count in government. There's nothing inevitable. So the idea that there's anything inevitable about a collision or conflict between the U.S. and China is just poppycock. It depends upon decisions made here. It depends upon decisions made there. Is it possible? Of course. But anything is possible.

We got through the Cold War. We got through 7-3/4 of a, what, four decades of competition with the Soviet Union. It stayed cold. You know, people thought it was inevitable we would have all sorts of conflict with the Soviet Union. We didn't. There's nothing inevitable about a U.S.-Chinese conflict. Is it competitive? Absolutely. Could it lead to conflict? Absolutely. That's why God invested diplomats. The whole challenge

here is to manage in a way that we avoid hopefully, if at all possible, it takes two to avoid it, conflict. At the same time, we protect our interests. We have to then define our interests in a reasonable way, not in a way that's so excessive that it would lead to conflict. But no, I haven't seen anything in the U.S.-China relationship that leads me to think that the "Thucydides Trap" is somehow our destiny.

MICHELLE CARUSO-CABRERA: By the way, the questioner applauds your definition of the Thucydides Trap saying that was a very clear and concise definition.

Representative Gallagher was at the Council on Foreign Relations recently and said that the goal of our foreign policy should be to avoid war, that he really is worried about that. You've kind of answered this.

DR. RICHARD HAASS: I disagree with that. I wasn't there for the meeting. But I disagree with war avoidance as a framing. Yes, all things being equal, don't get me wrong, I understand the desire to avoid wars. But if war avoidance becomes the goal of foreign policy, you can succeed in that and fail at everything else. If your foes know that war avoidance is your paramount aim, then that gives them an awful lot of license to act in the world in ways that could and would be injurious to your interests. So I would say war avoidance is a consideration. Obviously, it's a major, major, major consideration in the nuclear era, but it can't be an absolute. If your enemies know it is an absolute, what gets them to, in any way act with restraint. So we have to be careful to put it on, again

an absolute level as a goal.

MICHELLE CARUSO-CABRERA: We can move on to Ukraine. I was in London for the big Ukraine Conference. There's criticism there, and I've seen more of it since then that the White House and establishment Republicans, by the way, who support funding Ukraine, have not been clear enough about why it is in the national interest of the United States to do so. One, is it in the interest of the United States? Two, do you agree with the criticism? Have they been clear enough? And more thoughts, especially when we saw that the issue of funding Ukraine was such a big deal when it came to the budget.

DR. RICHARD HAASS: I would argue the case for supporting Ukraine is pretty straightforward. We want to push back against Russian aggression in Europe. As bad as it has been or could be against Ukraine, it wouldn't necessarily stop there. So that's pretty straightforward. And second of all, there are principles. We don't want to help bring about a world where countries can use force against other countries with impunity. It's the same reason we went to the defense of Kuwait thirty or so years ago when Iraq, under Saddam Hussein, invaded there. Usually people talk about the principle of the non-acquisition of a territory by force, about world order, and so forth.

That's what it's about and here it's married to Russian behavior. We don't want Russia

to succeed, much less to carry on. We don't want China and other countries to get the message that if they were to follow suit, they too would have a free hand. So I think the case for helping Ukraine is really straightforward. This is, to me, it's about black or white as you get. This is not wildly controversial.

The opposition parts of the Republican party, to a much lesser extent than the Democratic party, I find some strange combination of isolationism and this infatuation with Russia. I find it equal parts unattractive and head-scratching why people would pursue such a policy line. I don't think it's going to prevail here. The temporary reality that the vote on the budget the other day to end the shutdown, or to avoid the shutdown, didn't include funding for Ukraine. I think it's a temporary thing. It's pretty clear to me you've got a working majority across party lines to fund it.

That said, there is a larger issue here, and I've been talking about it for some time now, which is Ukraine's war objectives are to get back all of its territory, going back to 1991, before the 2014 invasion, to have economic reparations for the cost of the war, to have legal accountability for war crimes. I understand all those. I just don't think those are probably achievable. And in foreign policy you run into problems when you have objectives, however desirable they may be, that are not feasible. And I believe at some point, we, sooner rather than later, here in the United States as well as in Ukraine, there needs to be a serious conversation, perhaps in private, perhaps in public, or both, about

what our policy is going to be.

We're ending the second fighting season. The liberation of Ukrainian territory has not come about. It does not seem imminent. I could be wrong here, but I don't see signs that it's imminent. So then, what? A third fighting season? A fourth? A fifth? Sooner or later, and I fear sooner, support for Ukraine will begin to fall off if it looks that the policy can't succeed. I don't want that to happen. So I do think we have to, at some point, have a serious conversation about what is not simply a desirable policy, but what's also an achievable policy vis-a-vis Ukraine.

MICHELLE CARUSO-CABRERA: Does that mean a negotiated settlement that a lot of people talk about?

DR. RICHARD HAASS: I'm not sure you could have a negotiated settlement right now because that takes both sides. But if you can't have a negotiated settlement, you could have a de facto arrangement. You could have cease-fires. You can have armistices. I was the U.S. Envoy for the Cypress negotiations for years. You've never had a final end to that. We've lived with a divided Korean peninsula for three-quarters of a century without a formal peace treaty. You have an armistice and so forth.

I can imagine a situation where you would have some version of a cease-fire, various

types of security guarantees extended to Ukraine from NATO or the United States and a group of countries, possible Ukrainian special relationship with the E.U., long-term arms agreements and so forth. And basically Ukraine would have the territory it now has, which is roughly 80% of its territory, and then it would be left to pursue the missing 20% over time, possibly with other tools – economic tools, diplomatic tools.

I'll be blunt. It might very well have to wait for a post-Putin Russia that would be willing to make such compromises. But I think we're going to have to have that kind of creative conversation in our government, in the Ukraine government, between us with our European partners. It's just not obvious to me that the current course of action is one that can ultimately succeed.

MICHELLE CARUSO-CABRERA: A question from the audience. Should Ukraine join NATO now?

DR. RICHARD HAASS: I would say not now. NATO is a territorial defense. It's not clear what territory you'd be defending. There's a hot war going on. But I can imagine that under certain conditions, NATO or a NATO-like security commitment would be extended to Ukraine. Indeed, if there are any compromises to be made, it would have to be part of that package.

MICHELLE CARUSO-CABRERA: Let's go back to the topic of your book, and let's round it out as we're approaching the end here. Another question from the audience. Have you thought about it, how to link the teaching of civics to a greater appreciation of the issues surrounding foreign policy? In particular, if, and how to make principles and values of American democracy a part of our foreign policy?

DR. RICHARD HAASS: You almost had me there, until that last part. Look, we talked before about a coin of two sides – rights and obligations. I think national security is another coin of two sides. There's the foreign policy side and there's the domestic side. So I think that, you know, they're intimately connected. The best thing we can do for promoting democracy around the world is having a functioning democracy here. If our democracy here thrives, others will want to have a piece of it themselves. They'll want to follow suit.

I think in terms of how we conduct our foreign policy, though, we have to factor in many things. There's how we promote security, how we promote stability, how we promote our economic interests. So how we factor in democracy and human rights types interests, those are one element of an overall foreign policy. But in many cases, I would simply say we may not have either the ability or the luxury of making them the dominant elements.

MICHELLE CARUSO-CABRERA: Have you seen lately, I'm sure you have seen lately, but I don't know if the audience will be as familiar with this, there's a number of countries that are now announcing they have a feminist foreign policy. What do you think of that?

DR. RICHARD HAASS: I'm not sure I understand what that means. I could see where, you know, again domestically or even foreign policy, you would want to have programs that would help the plight of girls and women. There's a lot of research that shows if you have one dollar in your wallet and you want to make a difference, contribute to literacy among girls and women, and the payoffs from that are as good as you get in terms of reducing mortality among mothers as well as children. Providing micro-finance to women, again large payoffs in a lot of societies. So if that's what the phrase means, I'd say absolutely. There's all sorts of research that suggests that investing in girls and women around the world can have an extraordinarily high payoff, not just for girls and women, but for societies writ large.

MICHELLE CARUSO-CABRERA: One of the obligations is not, to vote. Is that part of being involved? But not officially go out and vote.

DR. RICHARD HAASS: Well, again I'm a great advocate of being informed and going out and voting. I thought it was rather remarkable that in the last midterm election, over

half of those who were eligible to vote in this country did not vote. You know, we've got a truly consequential set of elections coming up in just over a year, and again history suggests a significant chunk of Americans, 40-odd percent, may not vote.

So, yes, being involved. The single most important form of political involvement is voting. And we ought to make it less difficult to vote. But the principal barrier to voting for most Americans is not the absence of polling places and the rest, it's the absence of a will to go out and vote. And it's a sad irony. So much of our history was about getting the ability to determine our own futures, the right to vote. So much of our foreign policy has been about extending that to others. And here it is that Americans have this precious opportunity and many don't avail themselves of it. So, yes, I think of that as an obligation.

MICHELLE CARUSO-CABRERA: So you brought up the election, and I'm sure people would like your predictions, your observations, if we should have a third party, that we could have a third party. You know, jump ball, I mean you could do a whole hour on the election.

DR. RICHARD HAASS: Yes, look, a third party at the moment, I think, would be a bad thing. Third parties need time to develop. They shouldn't be done in a hurry, because if they're done in a hurry, they're simply going to attract votes from one party or another.

In this case, the most likely third-party candidates would all take votes away from the Democratic candidate, presumably President Biden, and would tip the election in favor of the Republican candidate, most likely to be Donald Trump. So I don't see that as a particularly desirable path. So I think all these people looking at third parties from Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. to Princeton professors to the No Labels group, I think really ought to rethink it unless their goal is to elect Donald Trump, if in fact he is the Republican candidate.

You know, otherwise the old saying, look, you've run for office, a week is a long time in politics, 52 weeks is a really long time, it's an eternity. If we look at the pace of what's happening politically, the pace of what's happening legally, the play between the two, who knows what the situation is going to be with the economy, inflation, interest rates, mortgage rates. What about the border? What about other social issues? There's a lot in play. All I'd say is at the moment I think it's a toss-up at the presidential level. I could see anybody, and again the two most likely candidates, the President and Donald Trump, I could see either winning at the moment. My fearless prediction congressionally is that the Republicans will win the Senate and the Democrats will win the House. So you heard it here and hopefully if I'm wrong you will have forgotten what I just said.

But I think there's a lot of concern in the country about the economy, how real standards of living are falling for many Americans. There's concerns about the border. And

obviously there's concerns about age, in the case of the President. So I would think that no one should feel sanguine at this point, or confident about making predictions about the presidential...

MICHELLE CARUSO-CABRERA: Any role for you in the next administration or this one? There's a question from the audience, and we only have a minute left.

DR. RICHARD HAASS: Look, I've been lucky enough to serve in four administrations. It's a great honor. I believe in public service. I believe in putting the country before anything. So if I were ever again asked, I would take it seriously, the possibility. I'm not highly confident again I will be asked, but if I were ever to be asked, of course, I would take it seriously.

MICHELLE CARUSO-CABRERA: Always a pleasure to speak with you, Richard. Really great. Thanks for joining us. Handing it back over to you, Barbara.

PRESIDENT BARBARA VAN ALLEN: Many thanks, Richard. That was terrific. And always, Michelle, thank you for a great interview. I just want to mention to our members and guests that we have many great speakers on the calendar for fall. And in October alone, we have Mary Daly, the Head of the San Francisco Fed, this Thursday, for a luncheon. That will be followed on October 12th, Mustafa Suleyman, the Author, and

CEO of Inflection AI, Co-Founder of Google DeepMind, will be in a conversation with Marie-Josée Kravis at a luncheon. On the 17th of October, we have a breakfast with the CEO of Intel. On October 19th, we will be hosting Jay Powell, and we have plenty of tables available, and those are starting to fill. So for anyone interested in that, please reach out to the team. On October 25th, we're going to host, in a webinar, the President and CEO of Northwell Health, Michael Dowling.

Please be sure to check your November calendar. We have lots coming up there as well, including a luncheon with Erika James, the Dean of the Wharton School over at Penn, will be in a conversation with actually John Williams, our Chair and the Head of the New York Fed. We also will have David Petraeus joining us again. We'll probably pick up on some of the topics that Richard just covered. And then we're going to close out the year December 7th with Bill Gates, who will receive the Club's Peter G. Peterson Award. So again, keep your eyes on our calendar. There's plenty to see.

And we always close by thanking our members of the Centennial Society joining us today. Their contributions continue to make our programming possible, and so many thanks to them. And thank you to everyone, oh, yes, I don't want to forget to mention The Forum, which is our new podcast that we just released. They had a picture there for a second of Becky Quick, CNBC Anchor, and also a board member, who is our host on our podcast. Again, on the Centennial Society, there is our Recognition Roll. Thank you

to those who participated today. And thank you to all who are attending today's event.

And again, many thanks, Richard, and Michelle. And we hope everyone has a great day. Thank you.