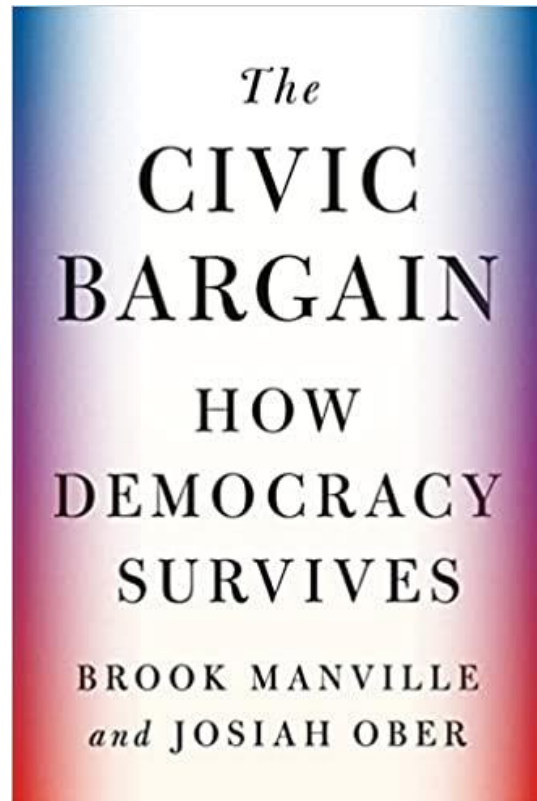


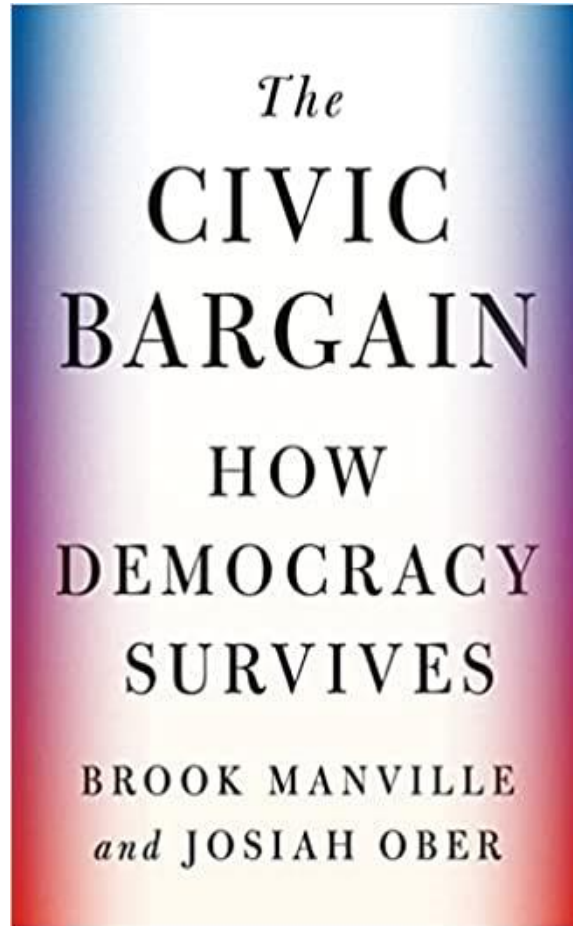
# Democracy's Survival in the Age of Authoritarianism



*Hosted by:  
The Library Committee &  
Conservative Group*

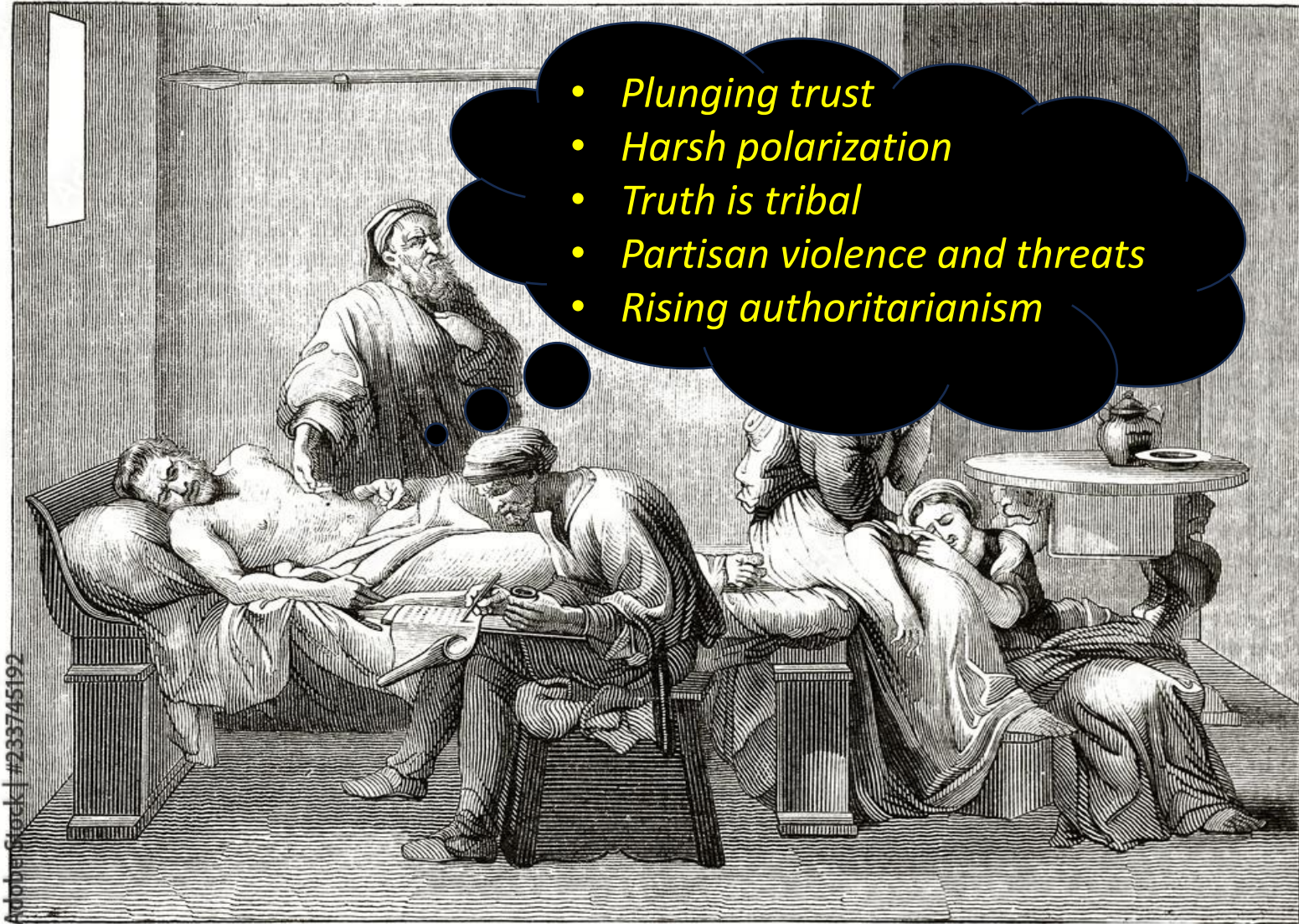
**Brook Manville**

February 28, 2024



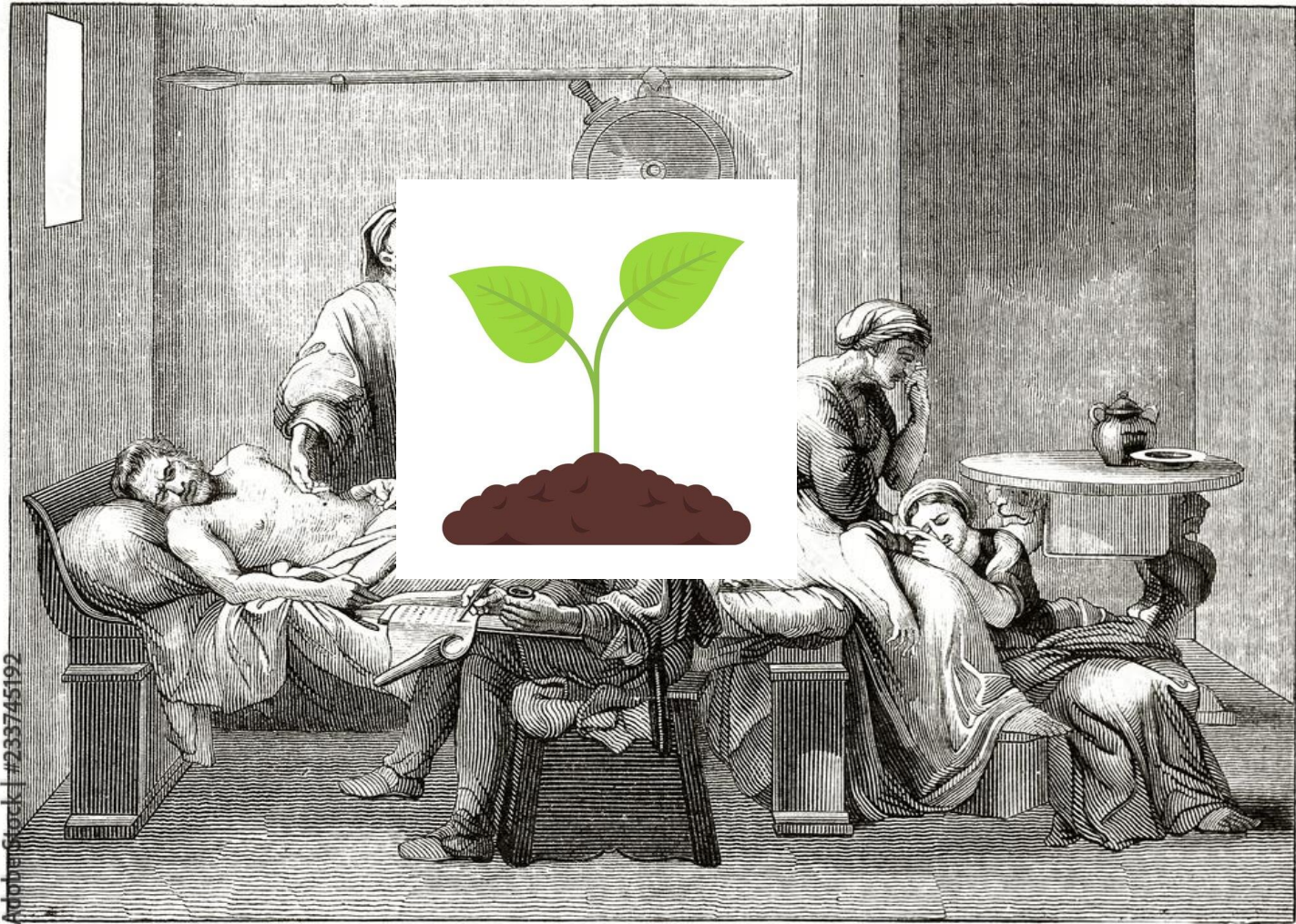
# Democracy is dying....?

- *Plunging trust*
- *Harsh polarization*
- *Truth is tribal*
- *Partisan violence and threats*
- *Rising authoritarianism*



AdobeStock | #233745192

# Democracy *Can* Survive....If We Have the Will To Renew It



# Unsatisfying "Solutions"



*Achieve Tribal  
Victory!*



- Electoral college
- Gerrymandering
- Supreme Court
- Congress reform

*Rewire the Machine!*



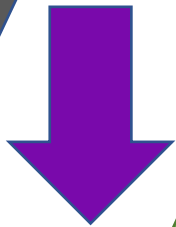
- More liberalism
- Swedish consensus
- End Deep State

*Reinvent the Dream!*



# Reframe: Back to Fundamentals

Democracy is dying.....



What keeps it alive?



What *is* democracy?

How did it first arise?

What kept it going?

What lessons for today?

# So....What **is** democracy?

*Rule of law, personal  
freedom, small  
government*

*Autocratic PR:  
"The Democratic  
People's Republic,"  
etc.*

*"collective decision  
making.. equality...."*

*"mob rule instead of  
a moderate  
Republic"*

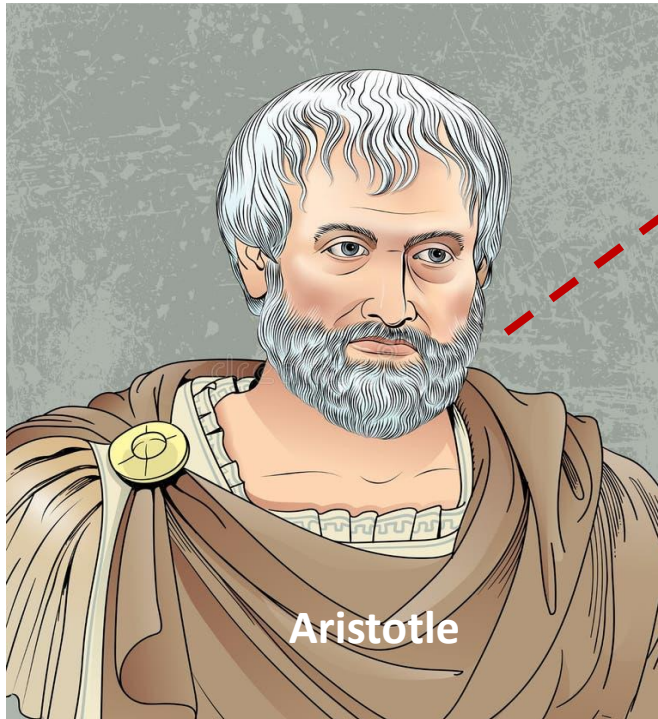
*"...a humane society  
for living well...."*

*"a benign welfare  
state run by  
experts"*



# The Simplicity of Aristotle....

“Self-governance by citizens...”



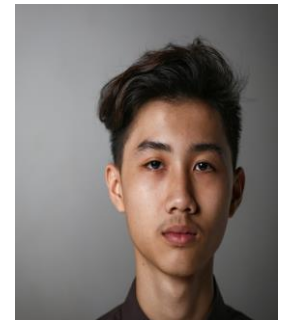
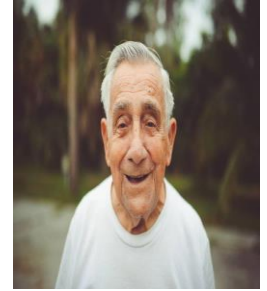
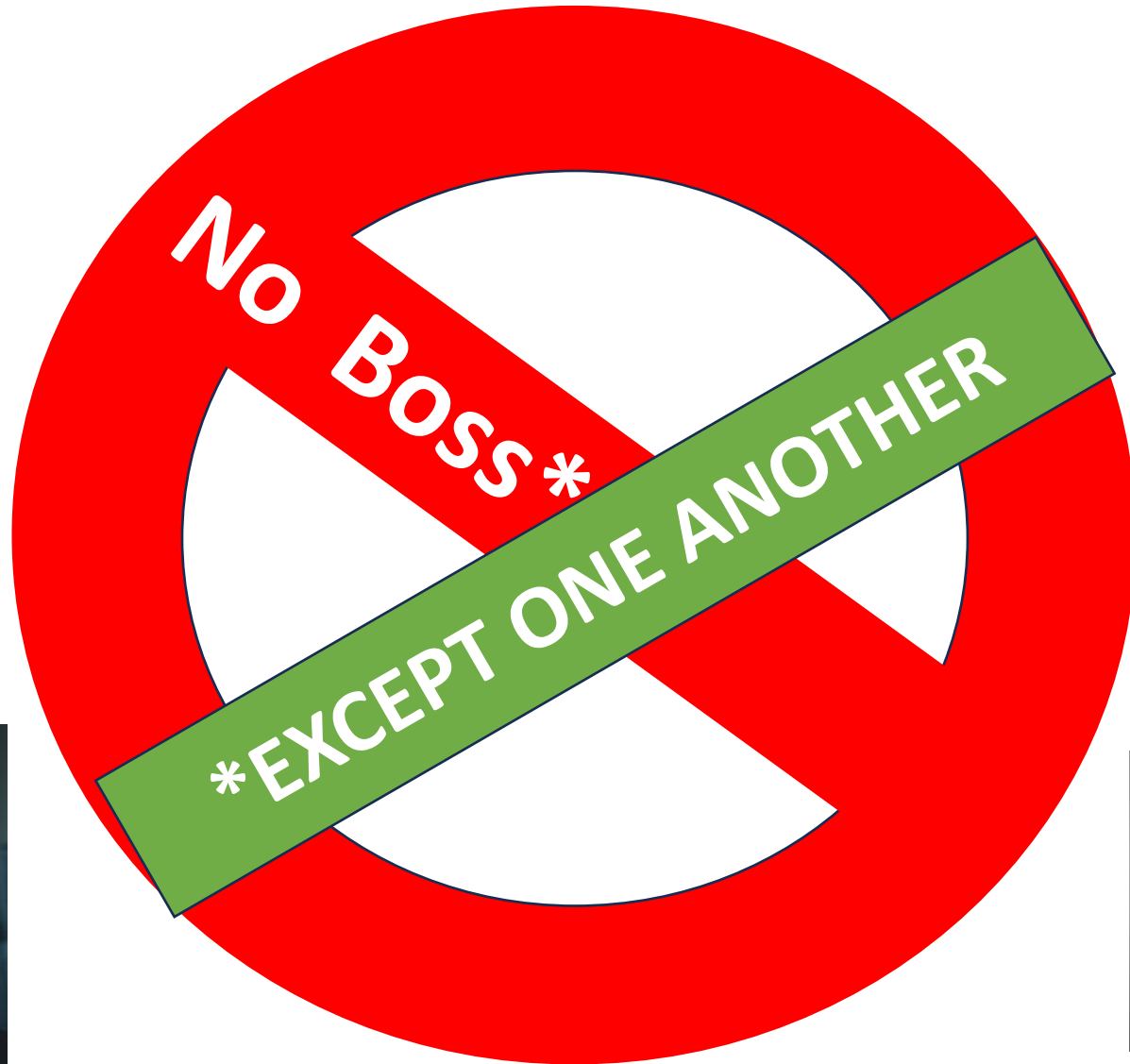
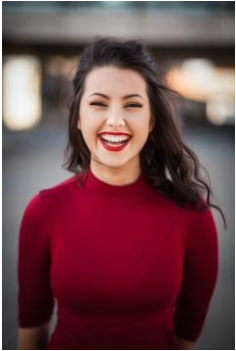
Aristotle



# Even More Simple



# The Asterisk Matters



# And that's what makes democracy so difficult



# The Core Dilemmas



- *How to achieve collective action without some boss telling everyone what to do?*
- *How to act together without being compelled to think alike?*
- *How to keep it going through crisis, and especially when scale increases?*

# History's Lessons: Creating and Maintaining No-Boss Governance?

How did democracy arise?

What kept it going?

What lessons for today?



Understand democracy as a...

**"Civic Bargain"**

The deal among free citizens **about how they will govern themselves**



# Democracy's Civic Bargain

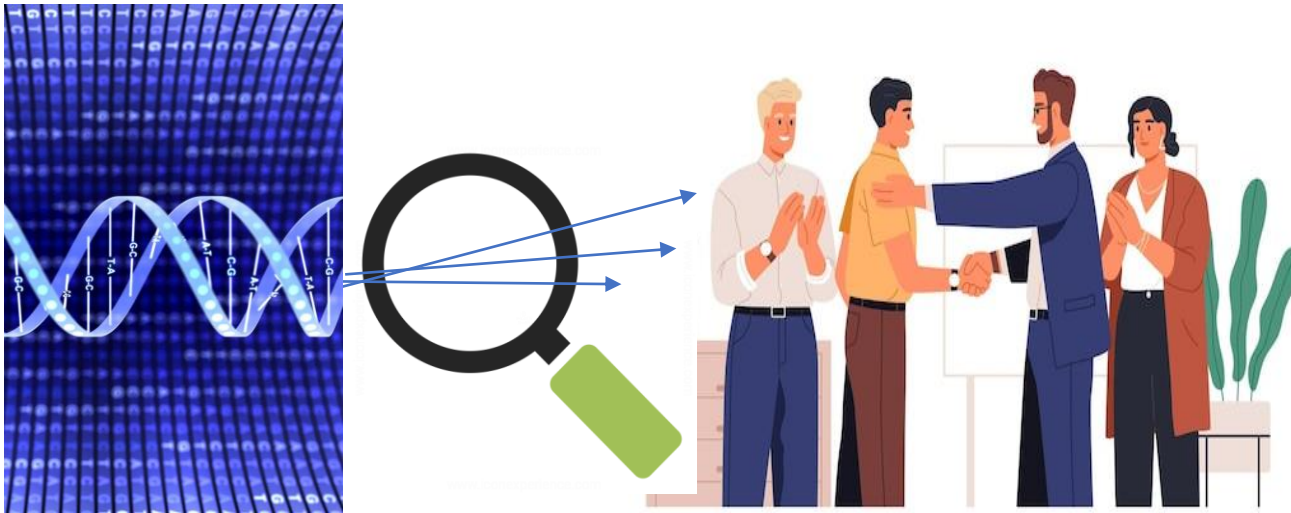
*Rules, norms, practices  
negotiated by citizens with one  
another, so they can govern  
themselves*

“So what’s  
our deal to  
live without a  
boss?”



“What do we  
have to do to  
make it  
work?”

# (Civic) Bargaining: Democracy's Deep DNA



- Negotiation shapes and maintains agreement to essential conditions of self-governance
- No one gets everything, but “in” is better than “out”
- Strength lies in the “reasonable middle”: compromise, not conflict between extremes
- The Perfect is the Enemy of the Common Good

# Citizens Agree Essential Conditions To Create and Sustain a Civic Bargain



Athens



Rome



Britain



USA

- 1. NO BOSS—EXCEPT ONE ANOTHER:** *Keep us free and equal*
  - 2. SECURITY AND WELFARE:** *Safety and some minimal livelihood for all*
- 
- 3. CITIZENSHIP-** *Who is, who isn't a citizen—and so what?*
  - 4. CITIZEN-LED INSTITUTIONS-** *Collective responsibility for policy and justice*
- 
- 5. GOOD FAITH NEGOTIATION-** *Compromise for the common good*
  - 6. CIVIC FRIENDSHIP-** *Debate, disagree but don't demonize*
  - 7. CIVIC EDUCATION:** *Democratic knowledge and practices for future citizens*



# Political Bargaining Launched Democracy's Evolution



Athens



Rome



Britain



USA

“Democracy *born* through conflict. Masses overthrow Elites...”

Democracy *evolves* as Bosses bargain to gain advantage: offer rights and protections for military, financial, and popular support

Great democracies created their **Civic Bargains** out of prior experience with political bargaining

# The Rise of the Civic Bargain



Athens



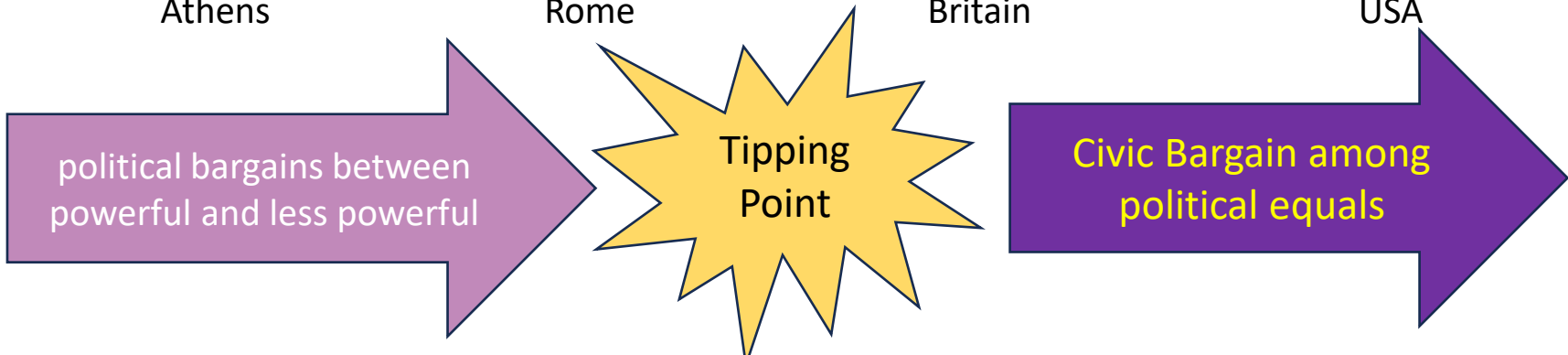
Rome



Britain



USA



**594 BC Solon to landowners & peasants:**  
 “Avert civil war with a power-sharing compromise”

**508 BC Cleisthenes to the *demos*:** “Fight with me, and become equal citizens in a *polis*.”

**509 BC Patricians to plebs:**  
 “The Senate will rule, but you’ll have some minor say in elections and major policy”

**287 Patricians accept Lex Hortensia—**“End your military strikes and plebeians will share much more fully in *Res Publica*.”

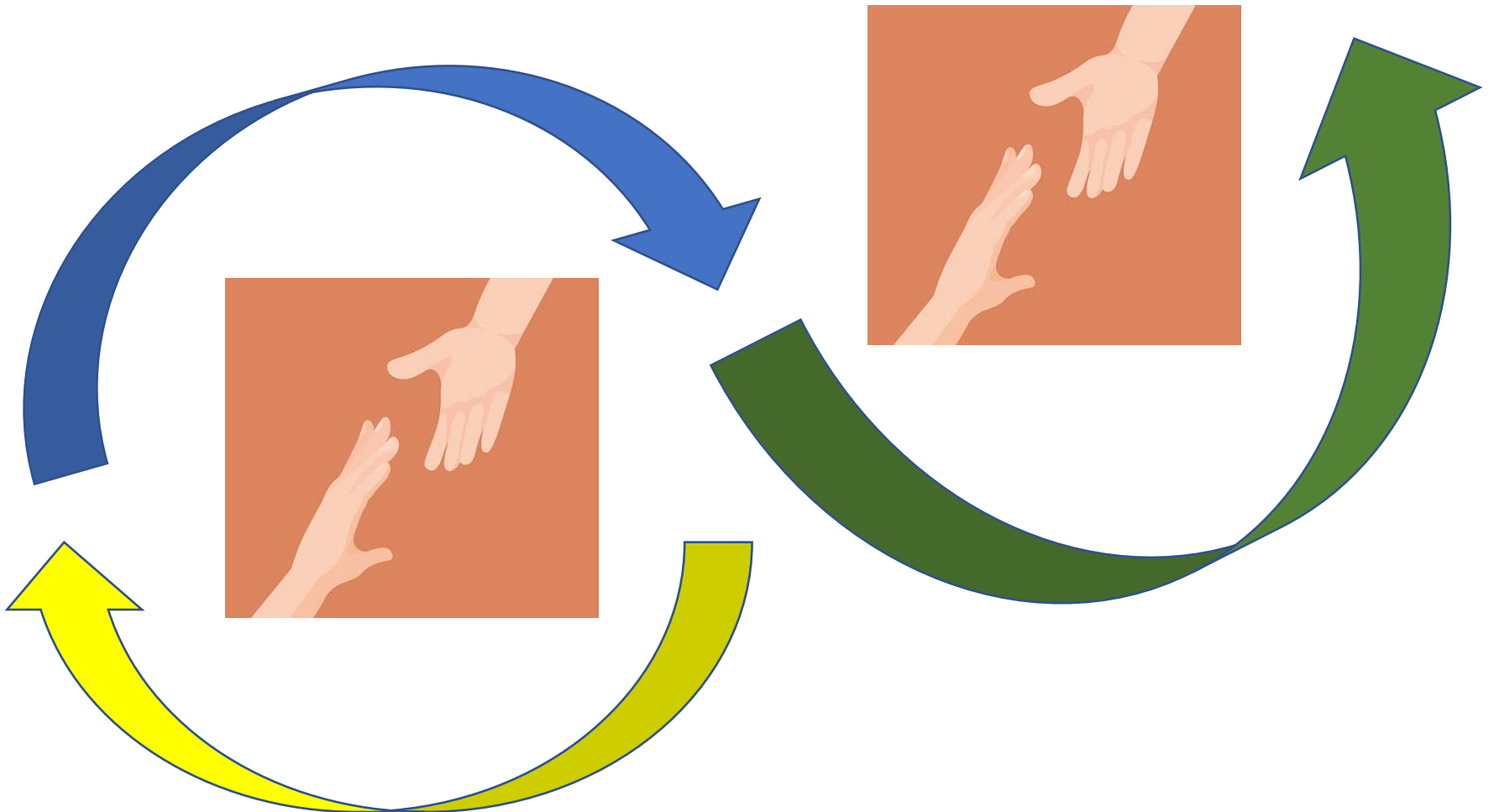
**1215 Kings and nobles:**  
 “The Monarch shall reign as long as some rule of law is applicable to all—including the king.”

**1689 King William to Parliament:** “The monarch yields final sovereignty to the popular-elected Parliament.”

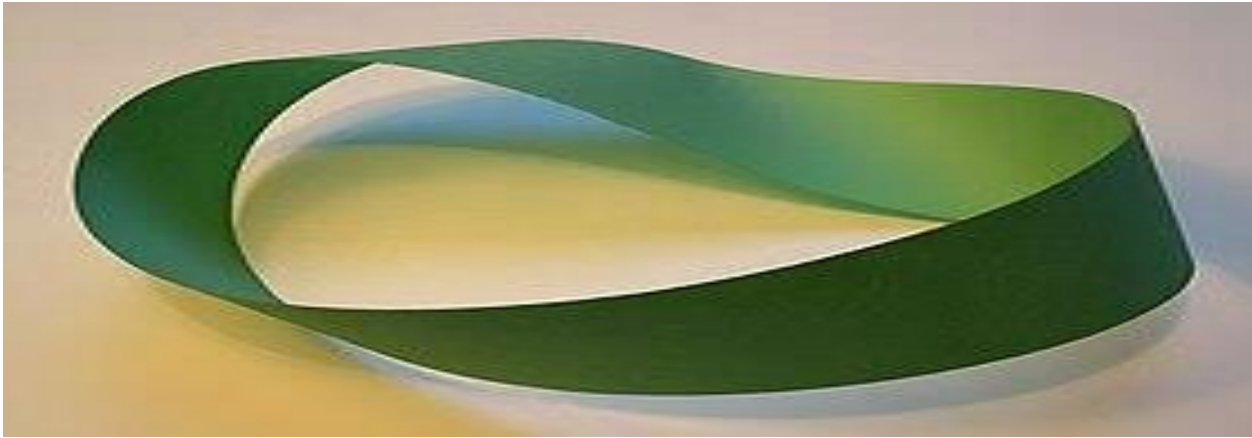
**1777 Articles of Confederation:** “Congress shall have limited foreign policy power, while States remain free and independent.”

**1787: Federalists and Anti-Federalists:** “States accept stronger central government but keep some local decisions and are guaranteed a Bill of Rights.”

# Democracy is Never Done: The Civic Bargain Must Be Continuously Renewed

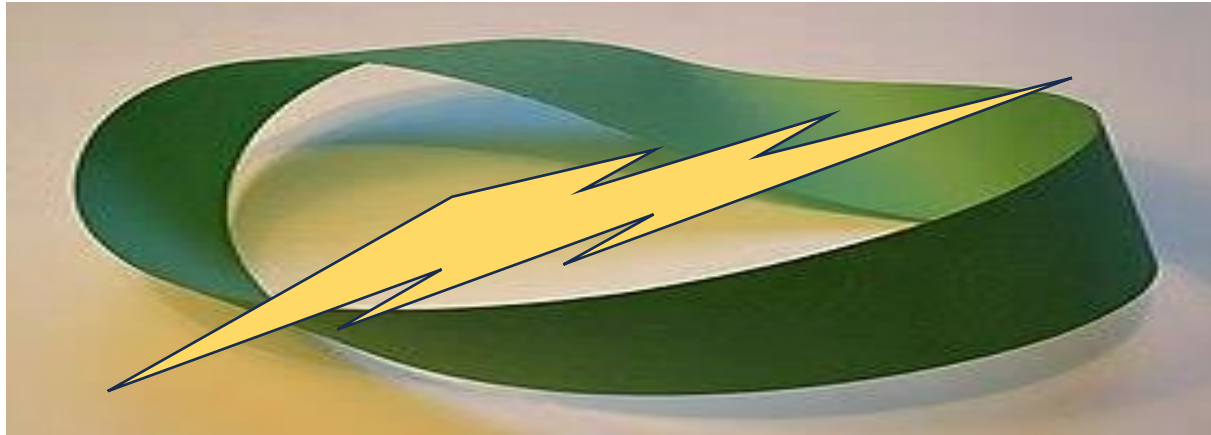


# A Core Dilemma: The Challenge of Scale



- *Successful democracies tend to grow—expanding economy increases births and also attracts immigration*
- *Increasing population adds new pressure on achieving collective action. But also more opportunity for innovation*
- *More voices, more competing ideas, more complexity increases potential factionalism and makes compromise ever more difficult—especially in crisis*

# But Greater Scale Has Another Kicker



- *Successful democracies also **have no choice but to keep growing**—to defend against hostile enemies, who envy or fear them, or seek their wealth and territory.*



# Historical Examples: Renewing/Revising the Civic Bargain To Meet Crisis/Adapt to Scale



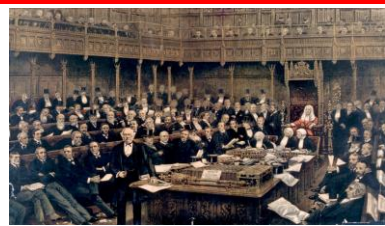
## Athens

Democracy restored after 404/3 BC refused revenge killings, and fortified lawmaking against mob decision-making (*no boss, civic friendship, institutions, compromise*)



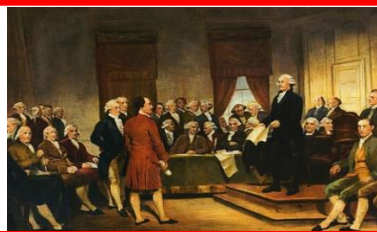
## Rome

Middle Republic social mobility and civic grants supports more balance of powers; tribunes increase plebeian rights; stories and rituals of shared sacrifice inspire values and loyalty for *Res Publica* (*no boss, citizenship, institutions, civic education*).



## Britain

19<sup>th</sup> C. reforms adopted to curb political corruption/elitism of Parliament. 20<sup>th</sup> C. institutes universal franchise after WWI sacrifices (*no boss, institutions, civic friendship, citizenship*)



## USA

Constitutional amendments post Civil War (e.g. 13, 14, 15 expand and clarify citizenship; programs of civic education 19-20<sup>th</sup> C (*institutions, citizenship, compromises, civic education, etc.*))

# Implications for America Today?



# What's the State of Our Current Civic Bargain?

1. NO BOSS—EXCEPT ONE ANOTHER
2. SECURITY AND WELFARE
3. CITIZENSHIP
4. CITIZEN-LED INSTITUTIONS
5. GOOD FAITH NEGOTIATION
6. CIVIC FRIENDSHIP
7. CIVIC EDUCATION



???



# Many of US Now Want A Boss



Photo by Andrea DeSantis

- 40% Americans: “Democracy is not the best form of Government”\*
- 25+% : “US should explore non-democratic forms of government” (31% Trump; 24% Biden)\*\*
- 40% : “Need leaders who break rules to ‘set things right.’” (R:48%; Ind: 38%; D: 29%)\*\*\*
- 23%: OK to “resort to political violence”\*\*\*

\* Chicago Council Global Affairs Oct 2022

\*\* U. Va Center for Politics Oct 2023

\*\*\* Public Religion Research Institute Oct 2023

# What Level of Security & Welfare Do We Have?



- Proliferating, more powerful foreign enemies
- Real (or perceived) increase in
  - mass shootings \*
  - property crimes\*\*
  - poverty rate \*\*\*
  - homelessness\*\*\*\*

\* Statista.com

\*\* FBI statistics 2022

\*\*\* US Census Bureau 2022 vs 2021

\*\*\*\* National Alliance to End Homelessness 2023

# What's the State of "Citizenship"



- Policy battles over immigration, and rights of migrants vs native born, etc.
- Legal action and public narratives stress **prerogatives** of citizenship vs **duties** ...
- Identity politics emphasize **differences** of ethnic and racial populations vs older traditions of **commonality** and integration

# Fading Citizen-Led Institutions



- Controversy over...
  - Election integrity
  - Political party system
  - Representational fairness
  - Politicization of Supreme Court
  - Technological influences
  - Majoritarianism vs protected minorities



# Good-Faith Negotiation: MIA



- Ongoing fights on budgets, support for Ukraine, protecting the border, etc.
- “Real leaders don’t compromise.”
- “America’s decline can be defined by ‘extremes rule and compromise is ruled out.’ ” (Bret Stephens)

# Civic Friendship?



"The only good Democrat is a dead democrat!"

"Trump parrots Hitler"

- Wars of "Political Theology"

# Civic Education's Pale Shadow

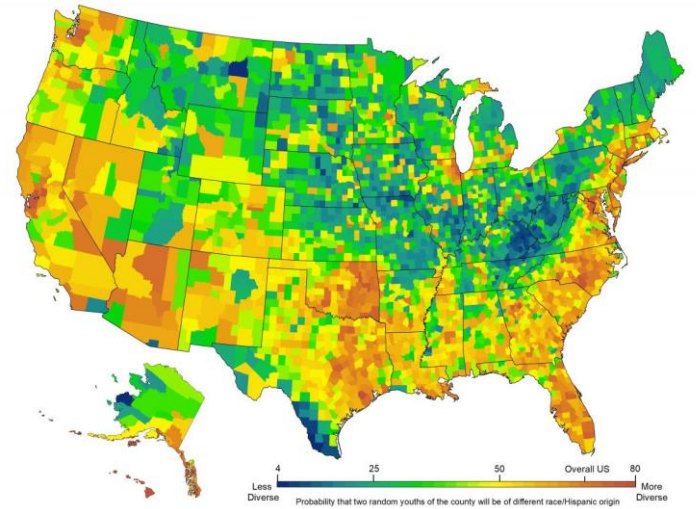
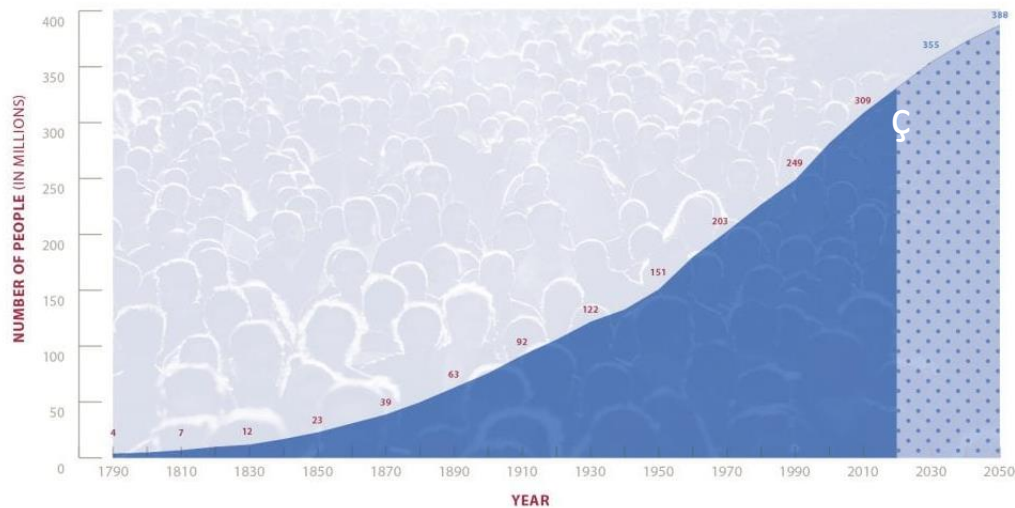


- 44% of Americans can't name the three branches of government
- 30% of high school seniors never participated in any kind of debate
- Less than 20% can explain how civic participation benefits democracy
- Less than one-third of 8<sup>th</sup> graders can identify the purpose of the *Declaration of Independence*

# Add in Our Own Challenges of Scale



U.S. Population and Projection (1790–2050)



Racial Diversity of Population,  
Ages 0–17, 2020



# So What Can Ordinary Citizens Do Now?



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# Understand the Risks and Costs of Governance By Boss—And What No Freedom Feels Like



# Confront the Challenges of Our Democratic Experiment



- Can we sustain our bargain to be free and still act together, even when we disagree?
- Can we learn how to benefit from that disagreement?
- Can we keep the experiment of this Bargain alive, as we keep getting bigger as a nation?

# Promote and Elect Civic Politicians Who Support “The Reasonable Middle”



# Support and Build “A Cross-Ideological Supermajority”



# Support The Growing Ecosystem of Organizations Devoted to Reducing Polarization and Rebuilding Civic Education



Civics Education in Schools Gains Steam – WSJ



Center for Civic Education

**Stanford** Civics Initiative

workplace  
initiatives



George Washington's  
Mount Vernon



Resist the Anger of Your Lizard Brain:  
Listen, Learn, and Look for Common Ground with One Another



# Democracy's Renewal Rests in All of Our Civic Hands





Thank you!

Q & A ???

