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>> This is a more academic effort to try to come up with better measures of state capacity, basically state administrative capacity and it's really motivated by China and Singapore and other Asian countries, because these countries are not democratic in the sense that we understand it. They do not observe norms of accountability and yet they deliver public services pretty effectively and it's kind of a challenge to liberal democracies, like we have here in the United States or Europe, that they can do this effectively in the absence of democratic accountability. And so one issue is how to better measure and categorize the state's ability to effectively provide public services.

Normatively, I would say there's no contest, that the United States, as a liberal democracy, is a much better political system overall and I think it has a more than 200 year track record that, you know, that shows that but I do think that they illustrate two different, in a way, vices of political systems. So what China has is a very effective administrative bureaucracy that can actually build airports, high speed rail, they can manage the macro economy, produce economic growth, good health education outcomes but there's no rule of law and there's no political accountability and so there's a high degree of corruption and there's a lack of citizen participation, which I think is one of the reasons that we exist as human beings. We want to be our own political masters and you're not allowed to do that in China. The United States, on the other hand, among liberal democracies even, I think, is over at one extreme in having a political system designed by the Founding Fathers to have a lot of checks and balances because the dominant political concern in American history has been the avoidance of tyranny. We've been very effective at this but one of the consequences is that because of our checks and balances, it's extremely hard for the American government to make decisions and to actually do things quickly and efficiently so I think with the budget battles we've been having in congress as a result of the high degree of polarization -- or when that high degree of polarization meets a system that's got lots of checks and balances, what you get is gridlock and the inability to make basic decisions and so I would say that although normatively the American system is much preferable, I think we need to shift the balance back a little to streamline government and to, you know, find ways of getting to consensus on issues where actually the American public is, you know, is relatively agreed.

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