Brian Lamb moderates discussion

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The future of democracy is apparently pretty fragile, like a flower.

Brian Lamb, founder and executive chairman of C-SPAN, moderated a discussion entitled “The Future of Democracy” between Purdue president Mitch Daniels and former congressman Lee Hamilton on Monday.

Earlier that day, Lamb led a master class on the impact of today’s democracy and politics. Lamb encouraged the audience to express their views on the topic. Similarly, in the later event, he allowed the audience to present questions to both Daniels and Hamilton for them to discuss.

Daniels and Hamilton discussed the challenges of our democracy, such as the general population’s attitude towards the government and our motivation to vote. According to Hamilton, our democracy is one of the monumental achievements in the history of mankind, but the size and diversity of the U.S. introduces difficulties.

“It’s also hard because the people want mutually contradictory things,” Hamilton said. “The politicians are dealing with a restless population.”

Hamilton likened our democracy to a flower, since it takes a while to nurture it and weed it out. Daniels agreed with him and commented that while he and Hamilton come from different political backgrounds, he still tends to agree with him on almost anything. He contrasted this to how today’s government does not compromise on most issues, which was a recurring topic for the rest of the discussion.

“We need to have institutions to manage the tensions, and historically, we have had them,” Daniels said. “But there are reasons, multiple reasons, why the institutions today are not reconciling.”

As for Congress’ performance in the last 10 years, Hamilton did not blame either party for its actions; he is more concerned about its timidity. He said Congress defers to the president all the time, which does not represent co-equal branches of government.

“I think the system works best when you have a strong Congress and a strong president, and you have tension between the two,” Hamilton said. “What I want to see is a member of Congress who believes in the institution of the Congress.”