US Election Analysis 2016: Media, Voters and the Campaign

Early reflections from leading academics

Edited by:
Darren Lilleker, Daniel Jackson, Einar Thorsen and Anastasia Veneti

Centre for Politics & Media Research

CSJCC Centre for the Study of Journalism, Culture & Community
Bournemouth University

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https://research.bournemouth.ac.uk/centre/politics-and-media-group/

For an electronic version with hyperlinked references please go to:
http://www.ElectionAnalysis2016.US

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November 2016
978-1-910042-10-6 US Election Analysis 2016: Media, Voters and the Campaign [eBook-PDF]
978-1-910042-11-3 US Election Analysis 2016: Media, Voters and the Campaign [Print / softcover]

Design & Layout: Mirva Villa

BIC Classification: GTC/JFD/KNT/JPHF/JPL/JPVK/JPVL

Published by
The Centre for the Study of Journalism, Culture and Community
Bournemouth University
Poole, England
BH12 5BB

Printed in Great Britain by:
Dorset Digital Print Ltd, 16 Glenmore Business Park,
Blackhill Road Holton Heath, Poole

Acknowledgements

On behalf of the editorial team we would like to recognise the financial and moral support of the Centre for Politics and Media Research and the Centre for the Study of Journalism, Culture and Community at Bournemouth University, and our great colleagues and student community. We would like to thank all the contributors for delivering interesting insights in a timely manner, despite many still struggling to comprehend the result and process its implications.

We owe a special debt of gratitude to Mirva Villa who was responsible for the production of the publication, ensuring all the text and pictures came together and giving the substance presentational gloss and professionalism.

Finally, a special thanks to our friends and family, in particular Bec, Liz and Teresa.

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Introduction

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On November 8th the United States of America voted on who would be the 45th President. In the end the US election, as is always the case, came down to a binary choice - but the choice this time was not between two ordinary candidates. While the candidates represented the status quo of the Democrat and Republican parties, each candidate offered a unique dimension to the campaign.

Hillary Clinton offered the potential to be the first woman President, a milestone as significant as the first black President. It also marked the first time a former First Lady was standing, so creating a unique form of political dynasty. Her prominence and experience signified her as particularly qualified, yet she was also a figure mired in scandal and lacking in popularity.

Donald Trump presented himself as the ultimate political outsider. Businessman, property magnate and reality TV host figured on his CV, but he had no experience of any form of political office. Trump was the gauche, crude voice of the people, or at least the section who equally felt as outsiders from modern American society, culture and politics.

It was an election contest that would enthral, bewilder, horrify and polarize in equal measure, both in the USA and around the world. Beyond the Americans who threw themselves unequivocally behind a candidate the choice was seen as difficult:

"there must be 700 elected into politics in America. Some of them are really good at their jobs. From that pot how the **** did it come down to a choice between these two"

These words of an ordinary American, a tourist in New York like the lead editor at the time, perhaps sum up the thoughts of many US citizens as election day approached. This may have been a factor in causing turnout to decline to an estimated 57.9%, down only marginally from 58.6% in 2012 but a marked reduction from the 61.6% who voted in 2008.

Of the 130 million who did vote, 47.8% supported Hillary Clinton, 47.3% backed Donald Trump. But this narrow win in the popular vote means little in the US system. It is electoral college votes that matter, and Trump won 306 to Clinton's 232, a clear 36 over the threshold. The bigger the states, the greater the number of electors, and most of these are expected to vote on a winner takes all basis. Trump may have gained only 68,236 more votes than Clinton of the 6 million votes cast in Pennsylvania but in doing so he won all 20 electoral college votes making her win by a 3 million vote margin in California meaningless despite gaining all 55 electoral college voters. The polarizing rhetoric of his campaign, coupled with the mismatch between actual votes and the electoral college and the tightness of the race has already led to street protests and signals greater divisions to emerge in the future.

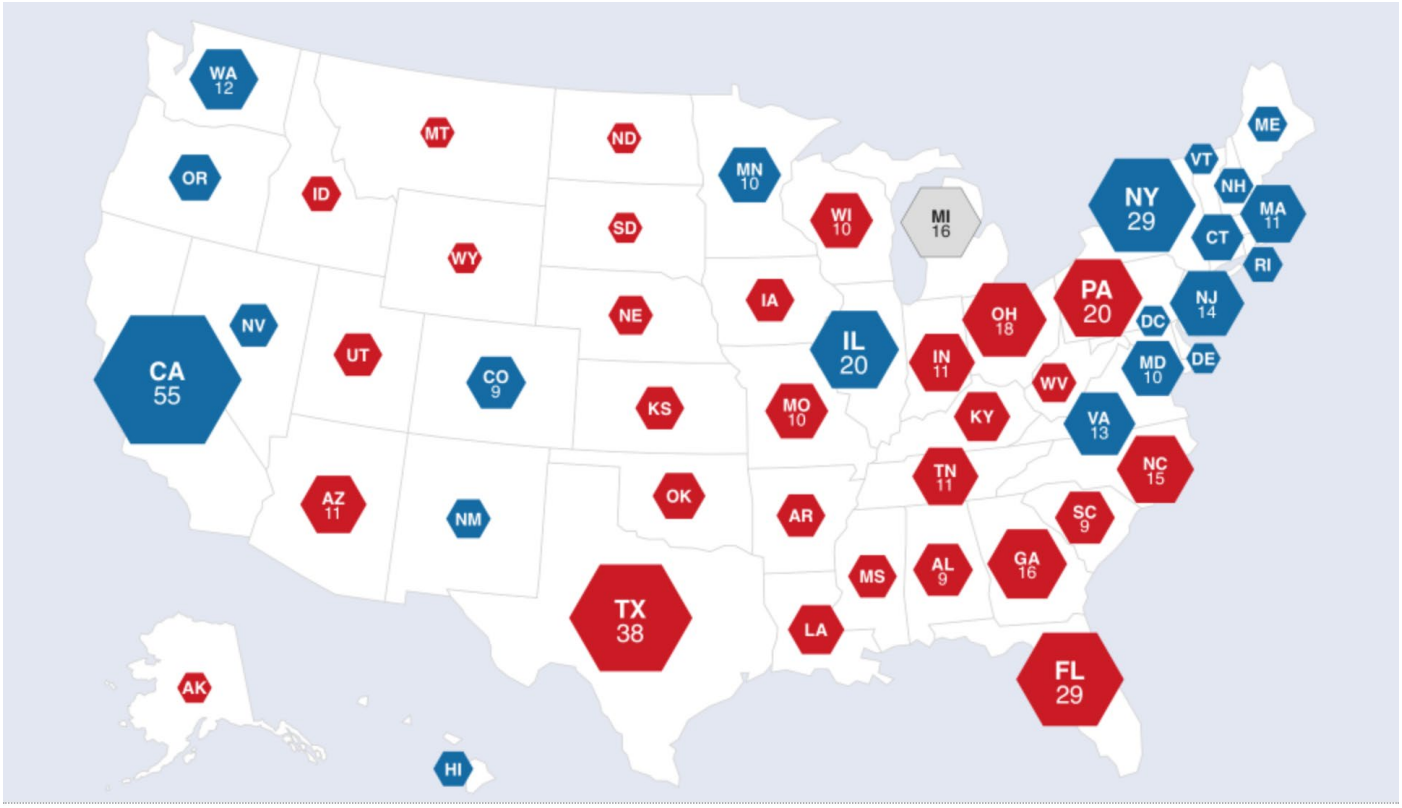
Whilst there is undoubtedly an eventful presidential term ahead, in this report we pause to look back at the 2016 contest. The aim of this publication is to capture immediate thoughts, reflections and early research insights of leading scholars in media and politics in the US and around the globe; and in this way contribute to public understanding of the contest whilst it is still fresh in the memory and help shape the path ahead. Here, we are particularly interested in what ways different forms of media, journalism and political communication contributed to people's engagement with the democratic process during the election – and crucially the relationship between media, citizens, and politicians.

Published within 10 days of the election, these contributions are short and accessible. Authors provide authoritative analysis of the campaign, including research findings or new theoretical insights; to bring readers original ways of understanding the election. Contributions also bring a rich range of disciplinary influences, from political science to popular culture, journalism studies to advertising. We hope this makes for a vibrant and engaging read.

The early analyses explore eight aspects of the election which emerged as our contributors reflected. There are explorations of the campaign tactics of the candidates, the rhetoric, advertising, body language and the interjections of celebrities. Policy differences, similarities and silences are assessed. While not a policy area in itself, diversity and social divisions became a key theme of the contest, therefore we dedicate a section to understanding how the election highlighted divisions in US society. The role of mainstream media is explored and critiqued, while others assess the coverage of the election from other nations. Digital media is deemed of sufficient importance to have a unique section, given it functioning as a space for both candidate campaigning and citizen commentary. Popular culture also played a key role, both in shaping perceptions of what a President should be as well as developing the persona of the candidates. The final section looks at the result, its implications for US and global politics and what we can infer with regards to the state of democracy in the US.

As the US and the world ponders on a future with Donald Trump leading the US, our project offers insights into how he came to power and what this means for us all.

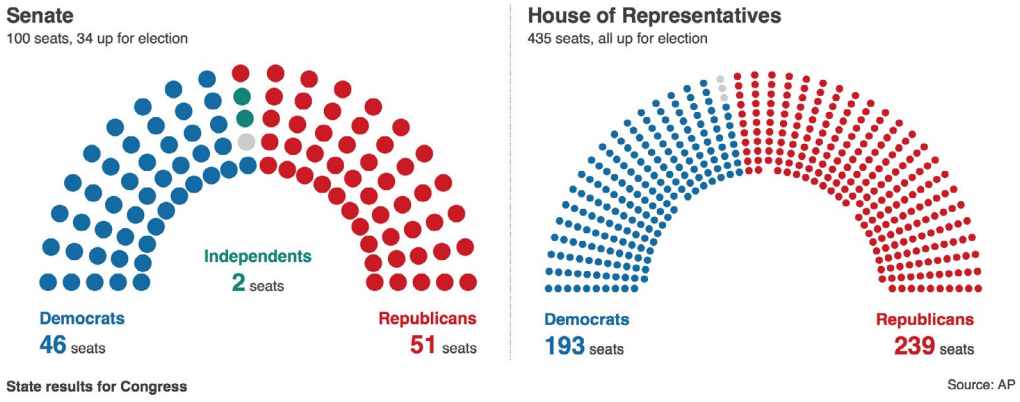
Results



Trump	61,003,417 votes	**47.1%**	
Clinton	62,115,634 votes	**48.0%**	
Others	6,418,188 votes	**5.0%**	

After 99.7% of voting districts

Source: AP



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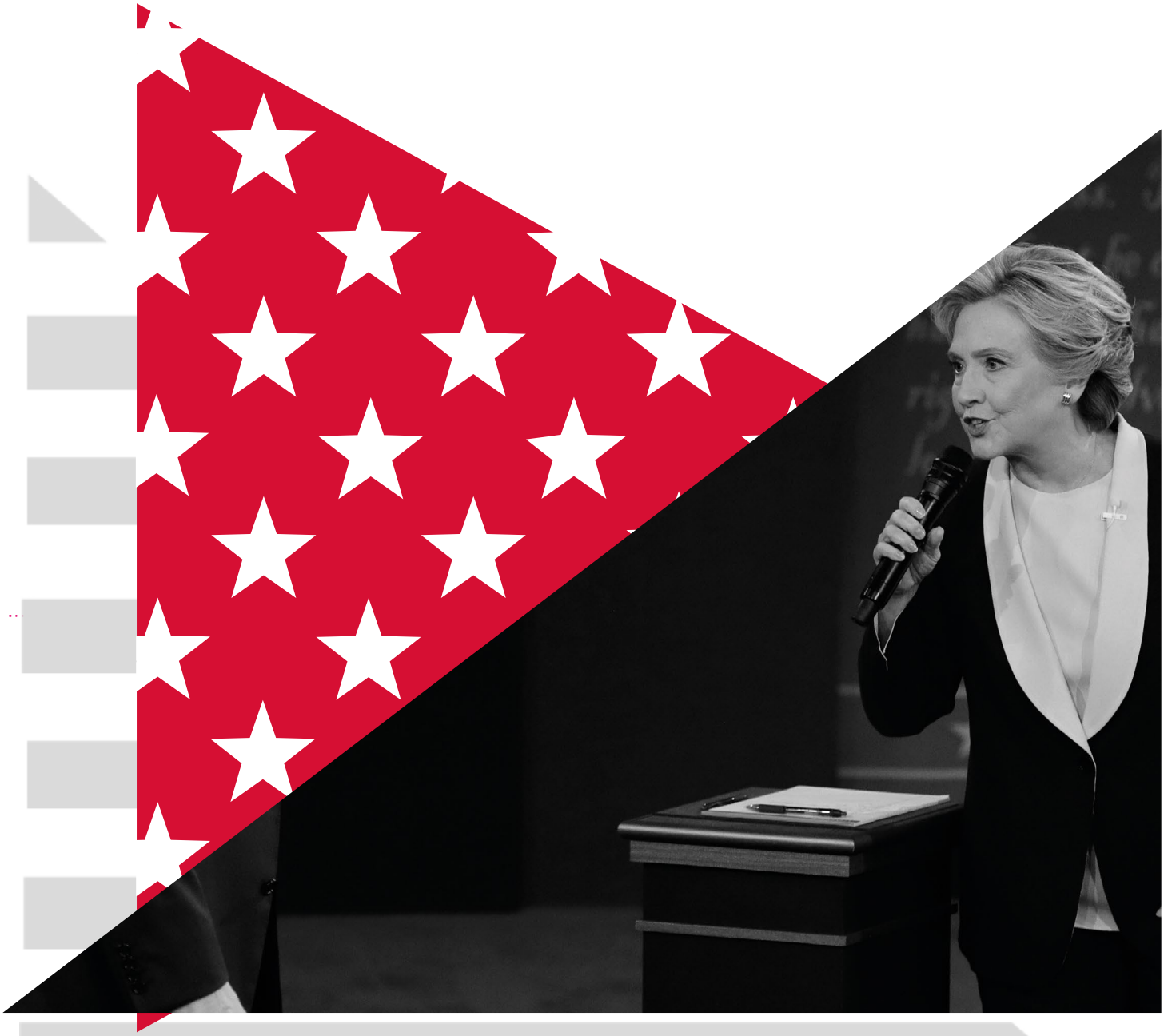

1

Media

The question of objectivity in the 2016 Presidential Election

In 1896, during the heyday of the sensational, opinionated, and interventionist newspapers of Yellow Journalism, New York Times owner Adolph Ochs boldly declared that the paper would report "impartially, without fear or favor"—a nod toward the norms of neutrality and objectivity that would mark American newspapers in the 20th century. These norms became professional values, undergirding journalists' claims for authority. Journalistic objectivity has long been subject to scholarly critique for either too simply dismissing human subjectivity or for disarming journalists from being able to stake positions of advocacy.

Yet, 120 years after Ochs's statement, the question of objectivity was thrust into public view by Times media columnist Jim Rutenberg. His front-page column on 9 August 2016 made waves in journalistic circles by questioning whether the Republican nominee Donald Trump deserved to be treated neutrally:

"If you're a working journalist and you believe that Donald J. Trump is a demagogue playing to the nation's worst racist and nationalistic tendencies, that he cozies up to anti-American dictators and that he would be dangerous with control of the United States nuclear codes, how the heck are you supposed to cover him?"

The question exposes the dilemma of journalists trapped in a system that prides neutrality. Trump was positioned as extraordinary and therefore worthy of extraordinary coverage. Journalist Jorge Ramos argued this point on the website of *Time magazine*:

"Just providing both points of view is not enough in the current presidential campaign. If a candidate is making racist and sexist remarks, we cannot hide in the principle of neutrality. That's a false equivalence."

Meanwhile, the digitally native Huffington Post staked out an oppositional stance early on, first by only running stories on Trump in the entertainment section until his emergence as a frontrunner for the Republican Party nomination forced him back into the news pages. However, the site continued to treat Trump as an unusual threat not to be normalized by appending the following editor's note to stories on Trump:

"Donald Trump regularly incites political violence and is a serial liar, rampant xenophobe, racist, misogynist and birther who has repeatedly pledged to ban all Muslims — 1.6 billion members of an entire religion — from entering the U.S."

As an anchor at the bottom of every Trump story, this statement strived to hold the candidate as contemptuous and unworthy of normal news treatment.

One way to make sense of this handwringing over objectivity is through Daniel Hallin's sphere model, which he laid out in his seminal book The Uncensored War. For Hallin, journalists sort events into three categories, or spheres anchored at one end by the sphere of consensus in which objectivity is not necessary because of shared beliefs, and, at the other end, the sphere of deviance in which objectivity is supplanted by shared loathing. Ordinarily, political contests fall squarely in between these sphere, in what Hallin labels the sphere of legitimate controversy. Disagreements between candidates occur, and the journalists' job is to stand aside and let the campaigns make their case without the intervention of partisan journalists. This fits squarely with rationalist models of democracy that place the news media as the conduits between campaigns and the mass public. The press is there to provide information; news audiences-as-the-voting-public are to make up their minds. It also confers the news media with tremendous cultural and political power to dictate the divide between normalcy and deviancy.

Trump struck a nerve that threatened how journalists think about what qualifies as legitimate controversy. And it was not only his controversial stances and actions that sparked soul-searching among journalists. More to the point, his callous disregard for the unwritten rules of political communication coupled with a penchant for perfidy regardless of countervailing information put him at odds with this system. Rutenberg and others took this as an affront, and suggested that Trump be cast into the sphere of deviancy—that is, as illegitimate. But to place the nominee of a major party into the sphere of deviancy requires a clear-eyed argument and commitment to parting with precedent. It asks journalists to break with ingrained ways of thinking and acting—a difficult request, even in the face of Trump's transgressions.

These questions have become only all the more pressing now that Trump has been elected President. His electoral surprise defying conventional polling wisdom presages an equally unorthodox presidency. But journalism does not respond well to unorthodoxy; it is regimented and orthodox, driven by patterns that make possible the unending crush of news stories. The next four years will test how journalists actualize their normative commitments, and whether this President is treated as other Presidents have, or if they come to occupy a new critical space. Either position is risky and will alienate part of the populace at a time when news industry economics are already flagging. But the choice still must be made.

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After objectivity?

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As the results of the 2016 election came in, the mainstream media in America and around the world demonstrated their inability to cope with the challenge of a President Trump within the conventional paradigms of journalistic objectivity, balance and fairness; or rather, to cope with it without normalising the most conspicuously overt racism, sexism, and proto-fascism ever seen in a serious candidate for POTUS.

As street protests broke out in Portland, Oregon in the days after the election, for example, BBC World noted the police definition of the events as a 'riot', in response to what it coyly described as 'some racist remarks' made by Trump during his campaign. A man whose comments were denounced even by his own party chief Paul Ryan as "textbook racism", and whose references to "grabbing pussy", "a nasty woman", "Miss House Keeping" and other indicators of unabashed misogyny horrified millions in the US across the party spectrum, was now President. For the BBC, henceforth, criticism of even the most outlandish and offensive remarks – when judged by the standards of recent decades - would be severely muted, if not excluded. Suddenly, rather than call a spade a spade in coverage of Trump's hate-mongering campaign, his ascendancy to office legitimised those views, and the process of normalisation had begun.

The 'quality' media have largely followed suit in this approach to Trump's victory, bestowing a new respectability on what before election day had been generally reported as absurdly offensive statements and policies. One could without too much imagination foresee Ku Klux Chan chief David Duke becoming an expert commentator on CNN or MSNBC (or at least on Fox News). In News Corp press titles all over the world, which had in any case been predictably ambivalent, if not outrightly supportive of Trump, commentators and pundits were to the fore in constructing legitimacy around policies such as US protectionism, weakening NATO, embracing Putin and so on.

This descent into normalisation of the hitherto unacceptable, occasioned by Trump's democratically-endowed seizure of political power as of November 8, is of course very similar to the rise of Hitler and the Nazis in 1930s Germany. Hitler's ascent, and all that came from it, was a product of free choices made in ballot boxes, and of free media coverage which moved to the extreme right with the ruling party. Then, as now, a demagogic populist exploited perceptions of victimhood and 'anti-elitism', targeting ethnic minorities as the Enemy. No-one forced national socialism on the German people, or on their media, nor on the many western media such as the Daily Mail in England which spoke out in his favour.

Post-November 8 the mainstream media have shown their inability to engage with the enormity of what has happening in western and global politics within conventional paradigms of objectivity. Left to them, the slide into fascism will simply become another news story, another 'he said, she said' performance of balance, legitimised by the fact that this is what democracy has delivered. No matter that in the 1930s the same obeisance led to the Holocaust.

This tendency is not the fault of the mainstream media, nor of their journalists, who are simply applying the professional codes and practices with which they have been raised. For those in the media who wish to stem a slide into democratically-legitimised fascism in the next four years – and of course, similar processes are now unfolding in Europe, Australia and elsewhere – it is time to rethink the appropriate response of 'objective' journalism to the post-factual politics of extreme subjectivity.

Journalism and the Illusion of Innocence

On October 23, two weeks before the US election, a Florida newspaper apologized to its readers for running too much news that was critical of Donald Trump. It happened at the *Daily Commercial*, based in Leesburg, Florida, a conservative-leaning area of the state with a lot of affluent retirees. The editors published an open letter to readers in which they they said: "This is not an endorsement of Trump, a candidate whose brutish, sometimes childish antics are responsible for his sizable deficit in the polls. Rather, it is a recognition that you, the voter, deserve better than we in the media have given you. You deserve a more balanced approach."

Reporting the news and serving readers are first principles in journalism, bedrock for sound practice. But protecting against criticism is not like that at all. It has far less legitimacy, especially when the criticism itself has thin legitimacy. This is how the phrase "working the refs" got started. Political actors try to influence judgment calls by screeching about bias, whether the charge is warranted or not.

My favourite description of "protecting ourselves against criticism" comes from a former reporter for the *Washington Post*, Paul Taylor, in his 1990 book about election coverage: *See How They Run*. I have quoted it many times:

"Sometimes I worry that my squeamishness about making sharp judgments, pro or con, makes me unfit for the slam-bang world of daily journalism. Other times I conclude that it makes me ideally suited for newspapering– certainly for the rigors and conventions of modern 'objective' journalism. For I can dispose of my dilemmas by writing stories straight down the middle. I can search for the halfway point between the best and the worst that might be said about someone (or some policy or idea) and write my story in that fair-minded place. By aiming for the golden mean, I probably land near the best approximation of truth more often than if I were guided by any other set of compasses – partisan, ideological, psychological, whatever… Yes, I am seeking truth. But I'm also seeking refuge. I'm taking a pass on the toughest calls I face."

I am seeking truth. But I'm also seeking refuge. What if it's not possible to do both? This is what the editors of the *Daily Commercial* failed to ask themselves. And this is what the movement for Trump forced journalists everywhere in the US to realize, even if word never reached Leesburg, Florida.

Earlier in the campaign, Dean Baquet, editor of the *New York Times*, said Donald Trump had changed journalism.

"I was either editor or managing editor of the *L.A. Times* during the Swift Boat incident. Newspapers did not know — we did not quite know how to do it. I remember struggling with the reporter, Jim Rainey, who covers the media now, trying to get him to write the paragraph that laid out why the Swift Boat allegation was false… We didn't know how to write the paragraph that said, "This is just false…" We struggle with that. I think that Trump has ended that struggle."

You may wonder: in 1990, in 2004, or in 2016 how could it be hard to say in a news report "this is false" when the reporter and the editor are both persuaded that it is false? I have an answer for you. Alongside the production of news, reporters and editors in the mainstream press have for a long time been engaged in another manufacture: persuading us of their own innocence, especially when it comes to a contested election.

But as Dean Baquet declared: "Trump has ended that struggle." His point is not that it's suddenly "okay" to take sides. Trump ended the struggle in this sense: by openly trashing the norms of American politics, by flooding the campaign with wave after wave of provable falsehood, by convincing his supporters to despise and mistrust the press, Trump made it a certainty that when honest journalism was done about him it also worked against him.

For journalists this destroyed the illusion of innocence: just by doing your job you were undoing Trump… unless he could turn his portion of the electorate against you so decisively that the very possibility that you may be trying to do an honest job was rejected out of hand. And then the disaster became complete, for now by doing your job (applying scrutiny, checking facts) you were actually helping Trump, confirming among his most committed supporters the hateful image of a media elite trying to rig the election.

Either way the production of innocence failed. In this vexing situation the *Daily Commercial* of Leesburg, Florida published its open letter to readers. Unable to think it through clearly, the editors surrendered their right to speak truth to power (in this case audience power) and sold out their colleagues in the American press.

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Did election results trump frames of newspaper endorsements?

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With the endorsement of only two of the top 100 circulation newspapers in the US, Republican Donald J. Trump stunned the country by becoming the 45th president of the United States on November 8, 2016. Never before in the history of US politics had a presidential candidate received so few major newspaper endorsements.

Democrat Hilary Clinton was endorsed by 57 newspapers while Libertarian candidate Gary Johnson was endorsed by 4, and 3 newspapers recommend 'Not Trump.' The other 31 either did not endorse as a matter of principle or chose none of the candidates.

In comparison, in 2012 President Obama was endorsed by 41 of the top 100 circulation newspapers and Republican Mitt Romney 35; the other 24 newspapers did not endorse.

Was Trump's victory as stunning as a rebuke to the influence of newspaper endorsements as the election results were a surprise to most Americans – to most American opinion pollsters anyway?

That may be determined by how the frames used by the newspapers are understood. American newspapers have been steadily getting out of the presidential endorsement business during recent elections, framing their exit in terms of questioning the influence of endorsements.

Yet, in an interesting twist to the trend, this year some newspapers, such as *USA Today*, that previously refrained as a matter of principle from endorsing candidates at presidential elections jumped into the fray. Also, some that never or almost never endorsed a Democrat did so this time.

Many endorsements framed Clinton as flawed but acceptable, although many also went out of their way to say she was the best prepared presidential candidate ever. She was framed as having the character and temperament to be president.

Trump was framed 'dangerous' and 'unfit' because of personal comments and behavior that stoked racism, stirred anti-immigration sentiment, and disrespected women. He was framed as not having the character and temperament to be president.

And so, is it that newspaper endorsements – despite framing the candidates so drastically differently - did not have any influence in the election?

According to preliminary results, Clinton actually won the popular vote total. Trump won the most Electoral College votes, which determines who wins the presidency. Each state has a number of electoral votes equal to the state's number of members in the House of Representatives (which is based on the state's population) and US Senate (each state has two Senators). The candidate who wins the most votes in a state wins that state's electoral votes.

An analysis of endorsements of top 100 circulation newspapers and voting results in swing states (whose election outcome typically cannot be predicted) suggests areas for further study.

Trump's performance when endorsed shows he lost 46% to 48% in Nevada despite the endorsement of the *Las Vegas Review Journal*, a newspaper owned by one of his key wealthy supporters. He won Florida by the thin margin of 49% to 48%, after having been endorsed by the *Florida Times-Union*. In that state, four newspapers, including the largest, endorsed Clinton and one – the *Palm Beach Post* – did not endorse anyone.

Trump's performance when not endorsed shows he won some swing states by comfortable margins: Iowa (52% to 48%) although its largest newspaper, *The Des Moines Register,* endorsed Clinton; North Carolina (51% to 47%) and Ohio (52% to 44%) despite being repudiated by multiple newspapers in both states which endorsed Clinton or did not make an endorsement.

Trump's performance when not endorsed also shows some razor thin victories in swing states: Michigan (48% to 47%) and Wisconsin (48% to 47%). One might wonder whether the endorsement of Johnson on the Libertarian ticket by the *Detroit News* in Michigan and the recommendation of anyone but Trump by the Milwaukee-Wisconsin *Journal Sentinel* siphoned votes from Clinton. Many editorials framed a vote for Johnson as a vote for Trump.

Trump won Pennsylvania 49% to 48%. While Clinton won the big prize of the endorsement of the *Philadelphia Inquirer,* her reward might have been urban voters who would support her anyway. Neither she nor Trump earned the endorsement of the four other newspapers, two of which did not endorse and a further two did not endorse as a matter of principle.

Clinton won Virginia easily (50% to 45%) after its typically Republican leaning newspapers did not endorse Trump, although they did not endorse her either: one supported Johnson and the other did not endorse. Her vice presidential running mate was also from Virginia.

This analysis suggests that endorsements may still play an important role, and the frames used should be further explored. Perhaps the role of endorsements has changed and therefore the framing of endorsements should reflect that change. Maybe they already do so. This may be an invitation to other newspapers to come back to the presidential endorsement business. As some editorialists now say, endorsements no longer tell us how to vote, but rather they contribute to the conversation.

Trump and Mediatization

In 2007, the short-lived Fox News satire program *The Half-Hour News Hour* opened with a fantasy skit featuring a President Rush Limbaugh on his first day in the Oval Office. With the "joke" of the skit being that the right-wing radio host had somehow become President, Limbaugh calls for his Vice President, and in walks Ann Coulter, Limbaugh's fellow provocateur. It was a layered moment, with Fox News – itself a hybrid blend of broadcast news, conservative advocacy, and entertainment spectacle – imagining the fusion of conservative attack media and actual political power.

Some eight years later, when Donald Trump announced his candidacy, he abandoned the prepared speech his advisers had crafted for him, and instead offered his ad-lib rant about Mexican rapists and the need for a "beautiful" border wall. That, interestingly enough, was a direct invocation of Coulter's anti-immigration screed ¡Adios, America!, which had been published two weeks earlier. Coulter herself was a Trump advisor and evangelist, promoting him unequivocally in her next book: *In Trump We Trust*. Coulter, of course, won't be vice president, but the lines between presidential policy, political-entertainment media, and celebrity spectacle have become as profoundly fused as Fox had once imagined.

If we are to understand the phenomenon of a Trump presidency, then, we have to place it within the context of the melding of politics and entertainment. European scholars might call this mediatization – the culture-wide turn in which the organizing logic, institutional imperatives, and discursive practices of the media come to shape the very workings of the political system itself. Elsewhere, I have described this as "discursive integration" – a deep blending of once-discrete ways of talking about, knowing about, and acting within a world where politics, news, entertainment, commerce, and marketing have become inseparably intertwined.

Trump, as individual and as phenomenon, sits squarely at this point of intersection. His emergence as a public political figure well predates the 2016 campaign. Some date his decision to run for president to the 2011 White House Correspondence dinner, that weird hybrid of national politics, news media, and celebrity culture. Prior to that, though, Trump had long cultivated his public brand. Through the 1990s, he was the *playboy*: the swashbuckling negotiator imagined in *Art of the Deal* (1987) and the gold-plated ladies man constructed across media locales, including The Howard Stern Show and Playboy magazine. In the Bush years, when a neo-liberal ideology of corporate commerce rose to its global ascendance, Trump morphed into the *mogul*. For 11 years, he starred on NBC's *The Apprentice*, the popular reality TV show from executive producer Mark Burnett, the man behind *Survivor* and *Sarah Palin's Alaska*. There, as the *Washington Post's* Dan Balz writes, "Trump cultivated an image among middle-class Americans as a straight-shooting billionaire who had the bucks and the brass to stand up to anyone." That perception of "bucks and brass" in turn led to Trump's starring role on *Fox News*, where he used his weekly call-in segment on the propagandistic morning show *Fox and Friends* to aggressively push the Obama "birther" movement.

While many would understandably reject Trump's media trajectory as legitimate qualification for the US presidency, the reality is that in an age of mediatization, standards of all sorts are being radically refashioned. That point is well understood by Trump's long-time political adviser Roger Stone, who suggests that Trump's time on *The Apprentice* was "the greatest single asset to his presidential campaign." There, Stone explains, "He's perfectly made up. He's perfectly coiffed. He's perfectly lit. He's in the high-back chair making tough decisions. What does he look like? He looks like a president." To those of us who still want to envision the presidency as existing independently of what one "looks like" on television, Stone offers a rebuttal equally provocative and penetrating: "Now, I understand the elites say, 'Oh, that's reality TV.' Voters don't see it that way. Television news and television entertainment: it's all television."

It's all television, Stone suggests, suggesting that in an age of mediatization, television entertainment is as viable a path to the height of political power as a record of public service used to be. It also emphasizes the point that commercial television news is structurally incapable of providing any pushback. The US television news industry, of course, gave Trump an estimated 2 billion dollars in free air time during the campaign in pursuit of their mutual interests. Proclaimed Les Moonves, the head of CBS TV (home to Burnett's *Survivor*), the Trump phenomenon "may not be good for America, but it's damn good for CBS. … Sorry," he continued, "it's a terrible thing to say, but bring it on, Donald. Keep going."

Moonves, and his frenemies at Fox News, have got their wish. The Donald Trump show will be on nightly, for at least the next four years.

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The 2016 election and the success of fact free politics

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The US 2016 elections campaign will be remembered for many reasons, not the least for its surprising outcome. One of the most striking features of this campaign is the large amount of factually incorrect statements of President-elect Donald Trump. According to fact checkers about 7 out of 10 statements turned out to be (partly) false. Trump made false statements about his own past, things he said before, but also about major trends in society. Journalists have pointed this out numerous times, and after every debate the large number of incorrect statements highlighted by fact-checkers. How come this coverage had no effect on his electoral popularity? I see at least three reasons.

Emo trumps ratio

The growing relativity of opinions and emotions at the expense of facts and knowledge is hardly new. For over a decade the origins and consequences of 'fact free politics' are studied. It was comedian Stephen Colbert who introduced the term 'truthiness' to refer to things that are true according one's own conviction or view, but that are not necessarily supported by factual proof. The term became quite popular in the US as it nicely reflected the anti-intellectual climate that was on the rise. Policy makers and journalists that rely too much on figures and knowledge are getting out of touch with the concerns of ordinary people.

It is no surprise that in this climate there is ample room for false rumors and conspiracy theories rooted in strong political and religious views. Two of the most famous ones are related to Barack Obama's election in 2008. The wrong conviction that Obama is a Muslim is particularly strong among traditional Christians, while the myth that Obama is not born in the US seems mainly popular among outspoken conservative voters. Both fake stories are related to the fact that Obama is seen as different. The idea that a black man is running their country is for many hard to accept. They have a nostalgia for a familiar white, Christian country. That feeling is so strong that they are willing to believe a man that promises 'to bring back their country'.

The press is lying

During the primaries the US press had no idea how to deal with the phenomena of Trump and were fascinated by this unconventional, entertaining figure. Gradually, journalists started to reveal the factual mistakes and blunt lies of Trump. However, this coverage had probably little-to-no effect since the trust of US citizens in traditional media is extremely low. For instance, research shows that many attempts of journalists to debunk the myths about Obama had no effect and potentially even backfired. Where there's smoke there's fire. During this campaign the distrust in the media even turned into hatred. When Trump talked at his rallies about journalists as "the most dishonest people I know", his supporters booed fiercely and turned their anger to the cameras. Meanwhile more and more people rely on an information diet of conservative talk show radio, and internet stories that provide 'the real truth'.

Trump 4 truth

The book 'Trump revealed', written by two *Washington Post* journalists, describes well how for Donald Trump the truth has always been subservient to his goals and ambitions. Trump believes what he says is true, or almost true, or ought to be true. According to Trump the people want someone who sees it big, and who plays to their wildest dreams and expectations. They know that he exaggerates, but believe, or want to believe, that he is right. Tony Schwartz, the ghostwriter of Trumps' book The Art of the Deal came up with the term 'truthful hyperbole'. It is a contradiction, but Trump loved it.

Trump used several truthful hyperboles to promote his core messages, and even adjusted the facts to fit his story. For instance, he claimed unemployment is eight times higher than official figures indicate, and the number of Syrian refugees that Obama plans to permit into the US is multiplied by 25. It makes his claim stronger, and the attention he gets larger.

While these exaggerations and deliberate factual mistakes lead to consternation among his opponents, his followers don't mind. On the contrary, they see in Trump someone that finally tells the truth. Trump tells it like it is and calls problems by their name. He is not afraid to tell the public that the US has become a loser and their President is the founder of ISIS. According to his own words, he has to, because he is a 'truth teller'. Telling the truth is stronger than himself. His spontaneous outbursts and insults seem to strengthen that reputation. And in case there is any doubt, Trump uses the phrase 'believe me', to stress that he knows well what he is talking about.

You don't need to believe me, but I doubt the latter is true.

Trump, truth and the media

The manner of Donald Trump's electoral success presents the Western media – not just America's – with an urgent and profound question: what is the role of truth in contemporary democratic political discourse?

In the midst of the US presidential campaign, *The Economist* newspaper devoted a cover story to the concept of "post-truth" politics, a term coined by an American blogger, David Roberts, in writing about American climate-change policy. With a climate-change denier now about to sit in the Oval Office, the urgency of the "truth" question becomes starkly obvious.

Denial of climate change is one of Trump's more serious but less fantastical lies. Among innumerable outrageous untruths, he has asserted that President Obama and Hillary Clinton were co-founders of Islamic State (IS), that Obama was not a US citizen, and that Hillary Clinton had laughed at a 12-year-old rape victim. After the second presidential debate, *The New York Times* enumerated 27 specific lies that he uttered in the course of the debate. The term "trumped up" has thus been given a new lease of life.

In the relatively recent past when at least some plausible degree of truth mattered in politics, this would have severely weakened his candidacy. Not now. Trump simply condemned the media as corrupt, as part of a great conspiracy by the so-called "elites" against the American people.

How did democratic politics become so detached from reality?

Clearly there are larger forces at work than anything the media alone can generate. A conventional but persuasive wisdom is emerging that millions of ordinary people, particularly in the Anglophone democracies, have been left behind by globalisation, and sacrificed on the altar of neoclassical economics. Evidence for this can be found in the Brexit vote and by the Occupy Wall Street movement.

Voters trapped in these circumstances know only one big truth: their living standards, share of the cake, and place in society are imperilled or reduced. Against this big truth, which they live every day, untruths about who founded IS, about Obama's birthplace or Hillary Clinton's alleged heartlessness towards a child rape victim, count for nothing in the moral calculus.

It is in exploiting this sentiment that elements of the media, particularly in the US, are seriously culpable.

An outrage industry has burgeoned, in which radio shock jocks such as Rush Limbaugh, and right-wing populist copycats such as Bill O'Reilly and Sean Hannity, have made large fortunes and global reputations for themselves as purveyors of outrage.

Limbaugh is reported to have 13.25 million regular weekly listeners, an audience size guaranteed to generate a mighty revenue stream. He is also reported to be on an eight-year $400 million contract, which has been extended to 2020.

Online entrepreneurs such as Matt Drudge, jumped on the outrage bandwagon, adding to its momentum.

Turbo-charging the industry of outrage, however, has been Fox News, the creation of Rupert Murdoch and a former Republican operative, Roger Ailes. Under the ludicrously misleading slogan of "balance", they conjoined the dynamics of talkback radio with the visual power of television and a bank of outspokenly conservative commentators to create the highest-rating cable news channel in the US.

Factual accuracy has not much to do with what these propagandists publish in the guise of journalism. Drudge has said that only 80% of his material is verified. Even accepting that improbably high number, the difficulty for everyone else is in knowing which 80%.

Longer term issues were at work as well.

The 24/7 symbiotic news cyclone in which social media and professional journalism are both caught up is destructive of truth. Material appears on social media, goes viral and becomes news for no better reason than that it is virulent. Newspapers, shrunken by the onslaught of the digital revolution on their revenues, with fewer journalistic resources and in a constant scramble for "hits" and "eyeballs", amplify "news" without troubling with time-consuming verification.

Resultant fragile levels of public trust in the media have been exploited by Donald Trump, and the media have been in no position to mount a credible defence.

In the spring 2016 issue of *Meanjin Quarterly*, the political editor of *The Guardian Australia*, Katharine Murphy, faced up to this issue of trust by asking: What role for journalism if facts no longer count? She wrote: "We have to look in the mirror. Our intemperate excesses have discounted our own moral value. Our own behavior has helped fuel a lack of trust."

This is a crisis for the media but also for the democratic process. The media has an ethical obligation to restore what it can of public trust. The starting point is to hew to the truth: verify material before publishing, make it more important to be right than to be first, and call to account people in public office who tell lies.

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Rise of Donald Trump: media as a voter-Decision accelerator

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The media are key in shaping public opinion during campaigns and can help voters with their decision making. If there were any doubts about the role of the media and their ability to compete with the Internet, those doubts were smacked down by this year's election. The first of three televised presidential debates between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump was watched by 84 million Americans – and this does not include those who viewed it on the Internet and abroad. It was not just the debates which had an influence on public opinion. There were also subsequent media and Internet commentaries and analyses which emerged after each of the three debates. How the media represent each of the candidates has the ability to affect people's voting decisions and thus the election results.

Ironically, Donald Trump, who complained about media bias and accused them of conspiring to rig the election, profited the most from the media attention. After Trump announced his candidacy for President of the United States in mid-June 2015, he was considered by most of the media to be more of an amusement than a serious candidate. They could not have been more wrong.

Priming of the Primaries

Even during the autumn and winter, Trump was considered to be an anomaly, despite the fact that he was doing well in the polls. The situation began to change with the first caucuses and primaries. It was then that it became obvious that the support for Trump was real and that he was a candidate to be contended with. And, in fact, he received the nomination smoothly.

The Democratic Party presidential primaries brought us a surprise, too. Hillary Clinton, the party favourite, found a capable opponent – certainly more a robust one than might have initially been expected – in Bernie Sanders. Sanders had more in common with Trump than mere criticism of the current political elites and system. Their popularity was greatly supported with the help of the media. Not that the media were uncritical of Sanders and Trump, quite the contrary. Although the media criticized them more than they praised them, neither of them were affected.

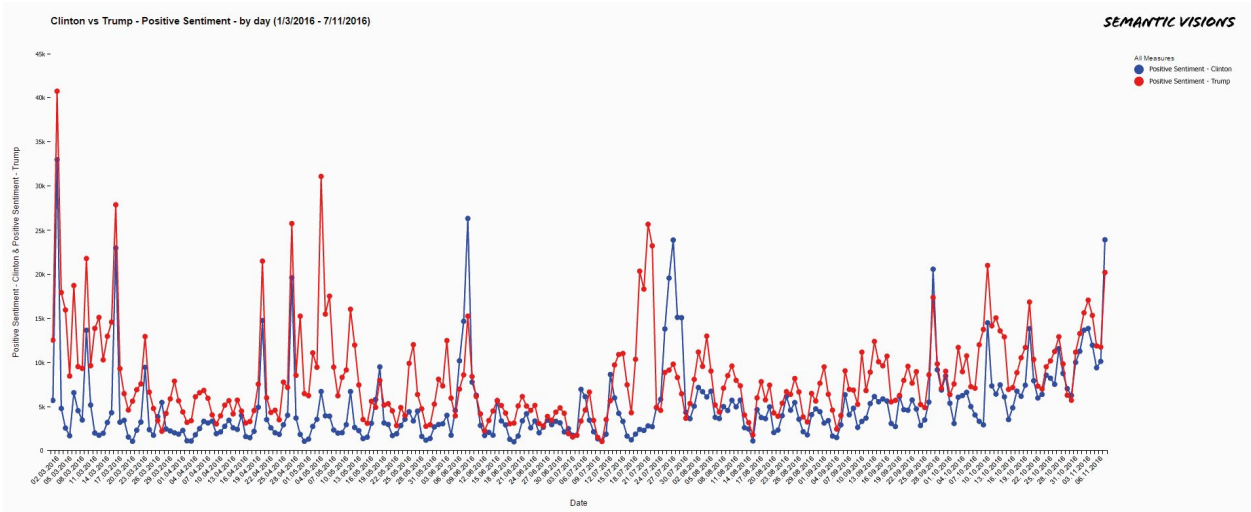
Some Democratic Party voters did not intend to accept the fact the only serious candidate in the primaries was Hillary Clinton. Bernie Sanders represented an alternative, not only on a personal level, but also for his socialist program and criticism of the political system. And there were a total of 17 candidates running for the Republican Party nomination. Although five of them withdrew from the race before the first caucus in Iowa, the biggest challenge for the rest of the candidates was to stand out from the crowd and claim their time in the media spotlight. Trump was the best at this. He also managed to be the most salient critic of the political system – a position shared with a considerable amount of Republican voters. So it happened that Sanders lost the party nomination, and the Republicans had to accept the bitter pill of a party nomination for Donald Trump.

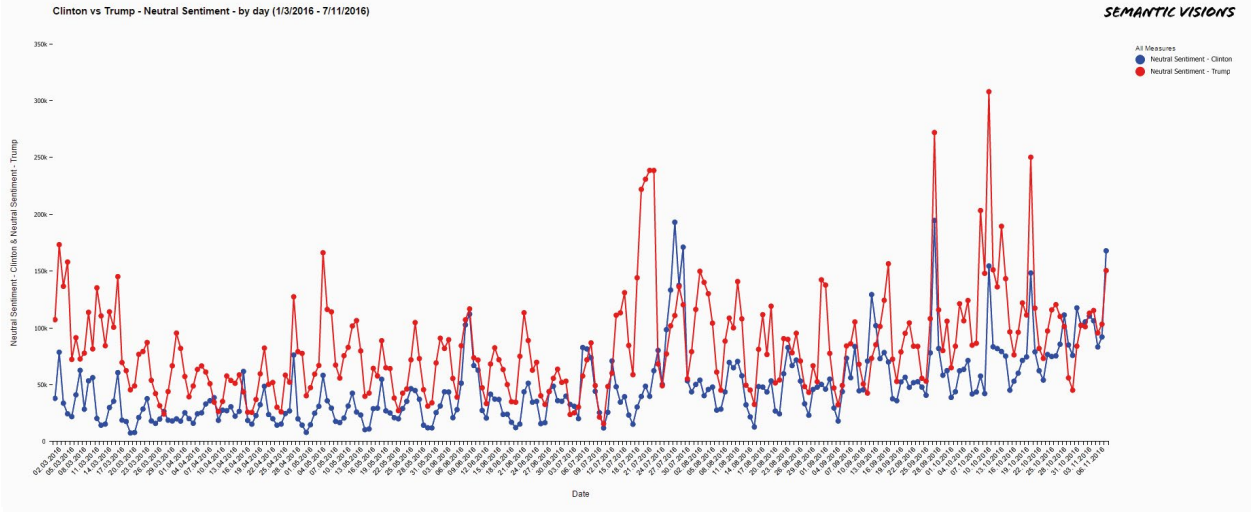
From Conventions to the General Elections

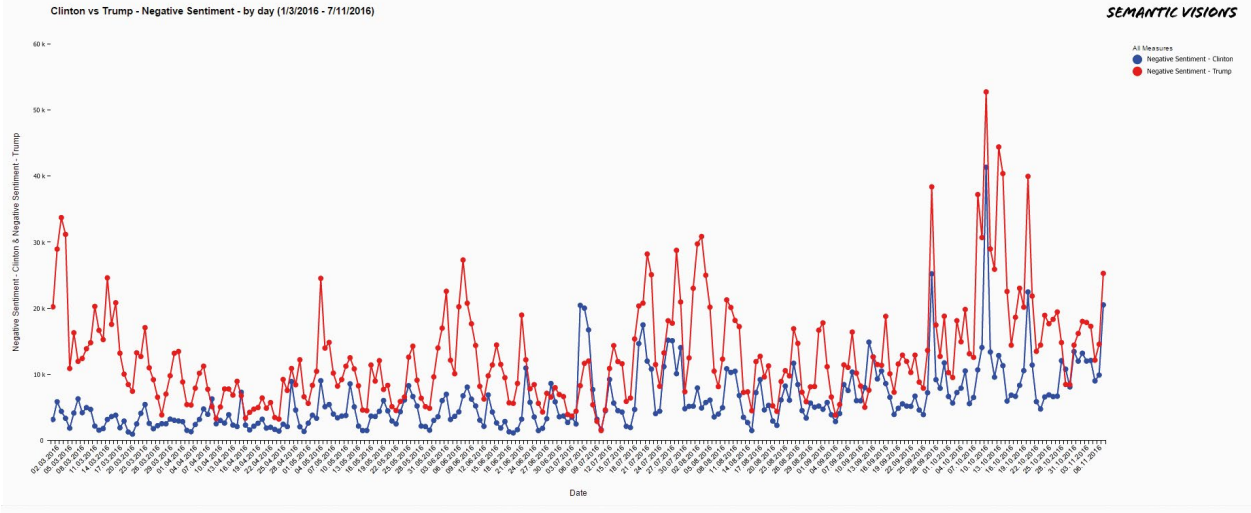
In early summer there was a shift in how the media represented Donald Trump and his campaign. – the media began to put Trump's statements into context and the critique increased. Trump, however, managed to convince his supporters that the media are biased and that they were trying to harm his campaign. Several events have occurred since the July conventions which affected candidate preferences in the polls. The most important moment for the Trump campaign was the publication of an eleven year old tape of Trump insulting women and approving of sexually violent behaviour towards them. A big issue for Clinton was the possible re-opening of the FBI investigation into her e-mail. Of course, the three presidential TV debates that took place in September and October were also important major events.

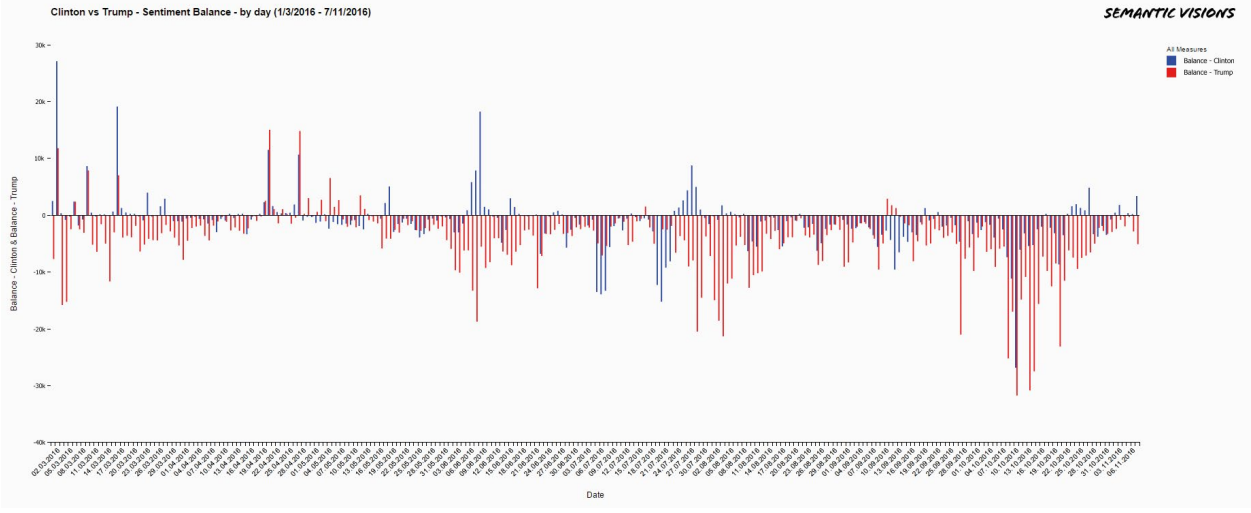
In terms of mentions of Trump and Clinton on the Internet, we can identify each of the three debates as a milestone in a given period (see graphs of positive, neutral and negative sentiment mentions). However, the last graph is the most interesting as it shows a balance in sentiment. The most negative Trump mentions were found in articles published during (and immediately after) the debates and in the days when his tape-scandal appeared. However, a huge increase of articles with neutral and positive sentiments can be seen just a few days before the general election. If we compare the evolution of the poll preference with the semantic balance of the articles and comments that have been published on the Internet, we find that the development of the polls is strikingly similar to the sentiment balance of the candidates. And, as the case of the US Presidential election in 2016 shows us, Internet discussions follow the media.

The graphs show the result of real-time and ongoing sentiment analysis of over 100 million articles from 275 thousand sources. These cover media websites, commentaries, political, business and academic analysis, etc. The graphs 1 – 3 show number of articles with specific sentiment published every day. Graph 4 shows sentiment balance made from average of positive and negative sentiments.
Source: Semantic Visions.


Clinton vs Trump - Positive Sentiment - by day (1/3/2016 - 7/11/2016)
SEMANTIC VISIONS
All Measures
Positive Sentiment - Clinton
Positive Sentiment - Trump
Positive Sentiment - Clinton & Positive Sentiment - Trump
Date


Clinton vs Trump - Neutral Sentiment - by day (1/3/2016 - 7/11/2016)
SEMANTIC VISIONS
All Measures
Neutral Sentiment - Clinton
Neutral Sentiment - Trump
Neutral Sentiment - Clinton & Neutral Sentiment - Trump
Date


Clinton vs Trump - Negative Sentiment - by day (1/3/2016 - 7/11/2016)
SEMANTIC VISIONS
All Measures
Negative Sentiment - Clinton
Negative Sentiment - Trump
Negative Sentiment - Clinton & Negative Sentiment - Trump
Date


Clinton vs Trump - Sentiment Balance - by day (1/3/2016 - 7/11/2016)
SEMANTIC VISIONS
All Measures
Balance - Clinton
Balance - Trump
Balance - Clinton & Balance - Trump
Date

The new normal? Campaigns & elections in the contemporary media environment

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In our 2011 book, *After Broadcast News: Media Regimes, Democracy, and the New Information Environment,* Bruce Williams and I argued that political, economic, cultural, and technological changes in the United States have fundamentally altered the media environment, with significant implications for the practice and even the meaning of politics. This emerging "media regime" blurs traditional distinctions between fact and opinion, news and entertainment, information producers and consumers, and mass mediated and interpersonal communication, creating a political landscape that is both "multiaxial" (i.e., in which control of the public agenda emerges from multiple, shifting, and previously invisible or less powerful actors) and "hyperreal" (i.e., in which the mediated representation of reality becomes more important than the facts underlying it).

The impact of these changes on political campaigns could be seen in small but significant ways as early as the 1980s, when the Reagan campaign used satellite technology and pre-packaged "video news releases" to bypass the national press and target local (and presumably less aggressive) journalists and media outlets (Hertsgaard, 1988). Other signs of change included Ross Perot's appearances on the cable talk show, Larry King Live to jump start his third party candidacy, and Bill Clinton's appearances on The Arsenio Hall Show (think sunglasses and saxophone) and MTV (think boxers or briefs), all in 1992; John McCain's unprecedented use internet fundraising in 2000; Howard Dean's insurgency campaign fueled by his (and Joe Trippi's) creative use of the internet to motivate and mobilize young supporters in 2004; and the implosion of Senator George Allen's reelection bid (and presidential aspirations) in 2006, the result of a cell phone video that went viral (think "macaca moment").

By 2008 and 2012 the use of digital, social, and non-traditional media and technology to announce ones candidacy, fund-raise, reach and engage supporters, and get out the vote had become firmly entrenched as an integral part of campaigning, more effectively by Democrats than Republicans (Kreiss, 2012). But despite some prominent examples (e.g., Saturday Night Live's parodies of Sarah Palin; The Daily Show's election coverage; The Colbert Report's satirical civic lessons on campaign finance; the viral releases of problematic comments by Mitt Romney and Barack Obama; even Obama's ability to overtake front runner Hilary Clinton), the impact of this reconstituted information environment remained largely channeled within the traditional media and political parties, often in informal partnership with tech savvy people "borrowed" from digital media companies (Kreiss, 2016).

The 2016 presidential campaign was a more radical departure from the recent past. The success of Donald Trump's and (though ultimately falling short) Bernie Sander's insurgent campaigns would be unthinkable in the campaign structure of the late 20th Century. To be sure, the new information environment did not cause their success – there were real issues of race, class, gender, religion, globalization, culture, and a deep mistrust of both the traditional media and Washington politics driving these candidates' unexpected popularity. But most of these fissures have existed since the nation's founding, and none were unique to this election. What was unique was the ability of a 75 year old socialist and a 70 year old businessman turned reality television celebrity to exploit the contemporary information environment in ways that were unprecedented, and done outside – and against the concerted efforts – of the traditional institutions of national politics.

Consider the Trump campaign. While disputes over "the facts" are common, Trump took this to a new level, demonstrating that a candidate can make statements that were verifiably false, be called out on these misstatements, and pay no political price for them. His campaign shattered the already dissolving distinction between news and entertainment, with primaries resembling nothing so much as a reality television show, debates that drew huge audiences in large part for the spectacle, and a traditional news media that provided Trump with unprecedented coverage because of his celebrity status. The presumed importance of both "free" (i.e., positive news coverage) and "paid" (i.e., televised campaign ads) mass media was upended by his use of Twitter to speak directly to, motivate, and mobilize his followers. And his message was amplified through online social networks, making his followers both consumers and producers of campaign discourse. Combined, these tactics exploited both the multiaxiality and hyperreality of the current information environment.

The future is difficult to predict, but one thing seems certain: Donald Trump is not an aberration. The type of candidates that emerge (in terms of ideology and personality), where they emerge from, who they mobilize, and how they exploit the radically changed information environment, will depend on the context. But the days of campaigns that are controlled by a stable set of political and media elites are over.

Did the media create Trump?

"Trump's victory is no surprise. He was never a joke. Treating him as one only strengthened him. He is both a creature and a creation of the media and the media will never own that", claimed filmmaker Michael Moore in his Facebook post, minutes after Trump had won the presidential race. Indeed, one of the most recurring questions before and after Trump's election was whether the media were to be blamed for his sweeping successes during the long campaign and, especially, for the shocking finale. The debate engaged mostly the liberal media outlets, where influential pundits, academics, and bloggers tried to come to grips with the widely shared feeling that the media's coverage of Trump was actually drawing him more popular support.

Donald Trump, to be true, helped the media to help him. The candidate was a celebrity on his own, a flamboyant tycoon, a controversial outsider in the GOP camp. He crisscrossed the country rallying crowds with intemperate speeches against blacks, muslims, Mexicans; raised hell worldwide with outrageous comments on females, tweeted insults to politicians and stars, he was a newsmaker and an agenda-setter all the way through. How could the media ignore such a bizarre presidential hopeful? That's the point. They just couldn't! So, they covered his triumphant march toward the nomination, using the horse race frame, the one that they are long accustomed to. The coverage willy-nilly ended up in boosting Trump's public image, in donating him billions worth of free publicity and, more importantly, in legitimizing his standing as presidential frontrunner, months before the Republican Convention in Cleveland. All not overtly partisan media outlets implemented both the typical journalistic production norms, and the commercial imperatives that scholars identify with the 'media logic'. It's the unusual, the sensational that draws the attention of the media, and Trump was both, and sensational stories 'sell well', and bring in a lot of money. That was honestly acknowledged by CBS CEO Leslie Moonves: "It may not be good for America, but it's damn good for CBS."

What happened with the media after Trump won the GOP nomination in July is something that will need further academic investigation. The news media suddenly realized that they had contributed to the process of 'king-making', a traditional power in the hands of the US media, but in this case it turned out to be a frightening burden. All the major (as well as several minor) media, even those traditionally aligned with the conservatives endorsed Hillary Clinton sort of felt remorseful, and started to strike a different chord. The liberal media stopped pretending to be unbiased observers of the political fray, and initiated an escalating, overt 'anti-Trump' campaign that lasted until the eve of Election Day. To what extent this media war helped again, of course in a quite different way, Trump to get elected as 45th President of the United States remains to be assessed. But some 'mea culpa' for failing to predict Trump's victory are starting to be heard in the defeated anti-Trump camp, like from the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. Anna Palmer and Jake Sherman in Politico's Playbook newsletter sum up marvelously the new certitude: "We were all wrong. That seems obvious, right? But we were more than wrong. We were laughably oblivious. The entire Washington political-media complex completely missed the mark. Not by inches or feet, but by miles." Let alone that by bombarding Trump on a daily basis, the media might also have fueled an "underdog effect" that prompted many undecided voters to support the "hated" candidate.

Did the media then 'create' Trump? They clearly did not create the personage, who was already to some extent a media darling, but contributed, unintentionally at first, and regretfully later, to the build up of his political persona, if negative. At the end the media may have been complicit in the defeat of Hillary Clinton, a candidate who was all but advantaged by a (too) favorable media frenzy.

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Trump, media, and the 'oxygen of publicity'

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Media scholars have paid a lot of attention to social media in recent elections. Yet, there is a compelling argument to think about the whole political communication sphere – from how the candidates frame their messages to how the traditional mass media covers them to how people comment and share on social media. In particular, our research suggests that the traditional mass media gave the 'oxygen of publicity' – to borrow the phrase Margaret Thatcher used to talk about British terrorism coverage– to the early Trump campaign. Although the coverage was often critical of the candidate, particularly for his statements about immigration, it arguably had the effect of consolidating the Trump political brand at a critical juncture.

In a joint project between the Philip Merrill College of Journalism and the Smith School of Business at the University of Maryland, Prof. Wendy W. Moe and I analyzed both traditional newspaper coverage and tweets relating to Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump in the early primary period (July 1 to September 24, 2015). The purpose was to establish how effective the candidates were at communicating their brands into both traditional and social media, as well as to examine how much people on Twitter were relating to either campaign messages or the news coverage. We focused on news stories and tweets that mentioned either of the candidates and words linked to four important primary campaign issues (the economy, healthcare, the Iranian nuclear deal, and immigration) as well as personal issues or traits linked to the candidates (such as "Bill Clinton", "corrupt" or "liar").

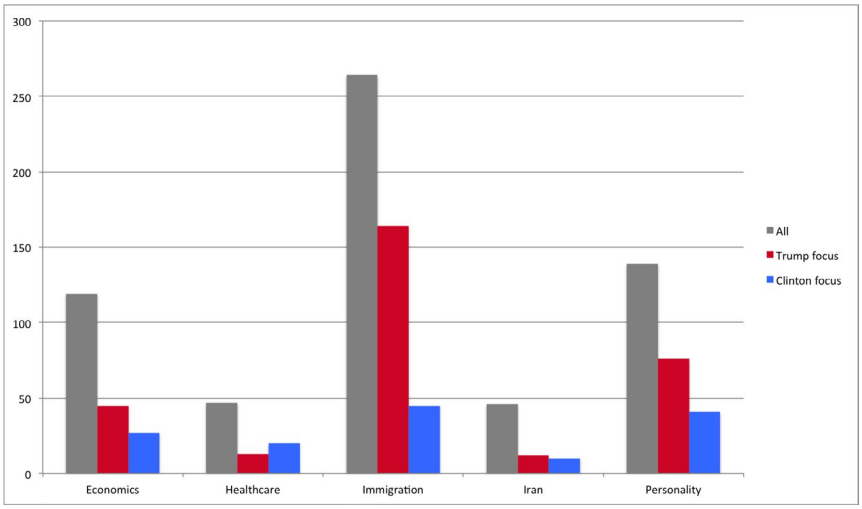
We found that the US political communication landscape was overwhelmed by amplification of Trump's statements about immigration (this was soon after his speech that called Mexican immigrants "rapists" and while he was promising to "build a wall"). Clinton tweeted more about the economy and healthcare and Trump tweeted more about immigration. This pattern was reflected in public tweets, in which tweets about the economy and healthcare were linked to Clinton and those about immigration were linked to Trump. While they were by no means always positive, the sheer volume of immigration/Trump tweets was the single largest election issue we measured circulating on Twitter from July to September 2015.

In 475 newspaper articles linked to the issue or personality keywords, immigration was mentioned in 264 articles (56 percent), while all other issues combined were mentioned in 232 articles (some mentioned more than one issue). And if you look at Chart 1, you'll see that in this most popular category of immigration, there was a huge focus on Trump. This crowded out discussion of other issues or even our personality keywords.

Journalists would be quick to point out that this coverage of Trump was generally aimed at highlighting how people found his statements outrageous or upsetting. In this sense, they were fulfilling the role of journalists as those who patrol the boundaries of culture, signaling that public officials should not make false or denigrating comments about social groups. But while this might have been the message intended, the message received by much of America was that Trump was a political force. This amplified his brand in a crowded primary in a far more powerful way than a carefully constructed policy message or paid advertising. While we have yet to carry out the analysis for the general election, observing the news coverage emphasis on scandals and threats – such as Trump's caginess about accepting the results – suggests that Trump continued to direct the narrative.

Thatcher famously claimed that denying those the British government deemed terrorist groups the 'oxygen of publicity' would help end terrorism in Northern Ireland. That didn't work out, not least because the roots of the conflict in Northern Ireland are broad, deep, and not dependent on frames by the British media. However, in the case of Trump, the mainstream media's constant barrage of coverage from the primaries onward – arguably designed as a warning but interpreted as a sign of influence – may have given critical oxygen to Trump's campaign.

Chart 1: Candidates linked with issues or personality keywords in newspaper articles, 1 July to 24 September 2015



Source: Author's research. Coding of 475 articles from *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *USA Today*. Articles were retrieved by using keywords for the issues and personality factors.

Chart 2: Tweets that mention either Trump or Clinton and contain a key word

Source: Author's research. Our project collected a total of 955,193 tweets that named Trump and 272,579 tweets that named Clinton. The chart above shows only those tweets that also mentioned one of our keywords. The tweets were automatically categorized by keywords.

2

Campaign

The #LolNothingMatters election

The American electoral system was supposed to be resilient against the siren call of the populist demagogue. This is by design. In many electoral systems, a party that can attract 15% of the population will receive (roughly) 15% of the representation. The United States is a winner-take-all system. Our lengthy, two-stage, extraordinarily expensive electoral process is designed to reward two centrist parties that each try to appeal to the broad center of the electorate.

And yet... Here we are. Donald Trump won the Republican primary over the opposition of virtually the entire Republican party leadership. He offered a message of xenophobia, a message of renewed racial dominance, a message that echoed fascist, autocratic appeals heard in other countries in decades past and present. Having won the Republican primary, his party leadership mostly fell in line, and Republican voters committed to voting for him regardless of his history or positions, his qualifications or his policy promises. That set up an inevitably close race in a deeply divided country. And against all expectations (including his own campaign's predictions), he emerged as the winner of that race.

This should not have happened. Setting aside the large-scale diplomatic, regulatory, and policy implications of Trump's victory, it should not have happened because Donald Trump ran a ludicrously poor campaign. He failed to pay his pollster. His field operation was a series of puff-yourself-up rallies with little call-to-action at the end. His data operation was effectively nonexistent. His messaging was designed to appeal to the worst impulses of a shrinking white electorate. His communications team was mostly concerned with keeping their candidate locked out of his own Twitter account. He lost all three debates, confirming the worst public fears about his awful temperament. He had a terrible convention, beset by own-goal mistakes practically every night. He picked fights with his own fellow Republicans, and with the families of fallen soldiers, and with individual reporters on the campaign trail.

Hillary Clinton, by comparison, ran the type of sophisticated, professional campaign that we have come to expect in modern American politics. She had better data, better field operations, better fundraising, and better communications. Her television commercials were marvelous. She was weighted down by a faux-scandal about her use of a private email server, by interference by the director of the FBI, and by interference of Russian hackers and WikiLeaks. But those were challenges that were not created by her own campaign. They were problems that the campaign tried its best to respond to.

It is tempting to reconstruct the history of this campaign in order to fit the outcome. Surely, if Donald Trump was the victor, he must have outmaneuvered his rival, or stumbled upon some secret formula for campaign success. We should resist this urge. Donald Trump ran a godawful mess of a campaign. His only strength was his singular, message: that American politics is (a) simple, (b) broken, because of (c) corruption and incompetence, and that (d) everything would be better once he was put in charge. That is the siren song of the strongman dictator. It is a rejection of liberal pluralism, which holds that politics and governance is messy and complicated, and requires a subtle hand to achieve positive change.

America has never had such a pure demagogue run for President before. Past presidents, dating back to the founding fathers, all concurred with the assumption that government is complicated, and requires deliberate intricacy to run successfully. American institutions – both parties and media organizations – were supposed to be strong enough to reject such an appeal. But many white Americans were swayed by the siren song of right wing demagoguery. And many people of color faced difficulty when trying to vote at the polls, due to voter suppression efforts crafted by the state itself. The result was that Hillary Clinton received a couple of million more votes than Donald Trump, but they were not the *right* votes in the *right* states. (Democrats also received several million more votes in the House of Representatives, and will have 47 fewer seats than the Republican party.)

America now lives under one-party Republican rule. It is a party that received fewer votes, a party that prioritized suppressing votes rather than reaching out to new voters, a party that has made impossible promises that run counter to deeply-held American norms and values. It is a party now led by an unstable individual who lacks the respect of his own partisan allies or even a modicum of policy expertise or diplomatic temperament.

We did not reach this state through a sophisticated propaganda operation, or through reasoned policy debate, or through the self-immolation of the non-authoritarian party. Donald Trump did not hide who he was. His mistakes and limitations were plain to see. But a substantial minority of the electorate chose to ignore his flaws, to behave as though American policy making and diplomatic leadership no longer mattered.

So here we are. Donald Trump is the legitimately elected president of the United States. If campaigns mattered, if policy details mattered, if endorsements mattered, if competence mattered, then Hillary Clinton would be President. Political scientists such as myself entered this election believing that all of these things mattered, at least a little bit. We, and our fellow citizens, are now left wondering if anything matters at all.

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Evidence for the powerful roles of polarization and partisanship

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The 2016 presidential campaign featured two candidates who were viewed negatively even by many members of their own party. In other words, many voters may have experienced ambivalence about their party's nominee throughout the campaign. While definitive data is not yet available, it appears that both candidates were able to overcome, to varying degrees, such ambivalence with many of their partisan supporters.

An uneasy feeling

A voter is ambivalent when he or she possesses both positive and negative feelings or beliefs about a candidate. For example, coverage of Clinton's email scandal may have caused a Democrat who otherwise would support many of her policies to be wary of her. Similarly, a potential Trump supporter may have felt positively about his positions on taxes while being alarmed by his bragging about sexually assaulting women, his racist language, or his tendency to pick fights with members of his own party.

Ambivalence has important consequences for both attitudes and behavior. Most relevant to our discussion here, ambivalent voters may be, in some cases, more willing to vote against the party they usually support. Perhaps more likely, ambivalent voters will take longer to make up their mind, indicating a lack of enthusiasm for his or her candidate. Consequently, a candidate and his or her party will have to spend more effort convincing an ambivalent voter to cast a ballot for his or her party.

Consistent with this conclusion is research demonstrating that more often than not, voters who have a history of supporting one party over the other do not defect from their party, even when experiencing ambivalence. Ambivalence toward the nominee of one's preferred party often declines over the course of the campaign. That is, individuals become more favorably disposed to their own party's candidate.

Underlying these findings is a long line of research indicating one of the major roles of a campaign is to bring home 'mismatched partisans'. For example, the GOP would attempt to persuade a Republican hesitant to support Trump. In recent elections, including 2016, the vast majority of partisans who voted have ended up supporting their party's nominee.

The role of campaigns

Conventional wisdom suggests that positive messaging by the party, the candidate and his or her surrogates causes positive feelings about the candidate to become more relevant to a supporter of a party, and negative feelings less so.

How might this work? With Clinton, months of advertisements and positive statements from President Obama, Bernie Sanders and others likely led to a softening of negative attitudes. And, we did in fact see her overall favorability numbers increase among Democrats.

There was reason to believe throughout the campaign that this process was not going to work as smoothly for Donald Trump and the Republicans. Trump has a habit of both starting and escalating disagreements with members of his own party. For example, from the very early days of his campaign he has had flair ups with recent presidential nominee John McCain and Speaker of the House Paul Ryan.

Moreover, several Republican Senators declared they would not be voting for Trump. And, public intellectuals such as Charles Krauthammer and George Will have also disavowed Trump. Likewise, many newspapers that have historically endorsed Republicans declined to endorse Trump and some even endorsed his opponent — for example, the Dallas Morning News endorsed Clinton, the first time the paper has endorsed a Democrat since 1940. Indeed, the editorial stated that "Trump is no Republican."

While Democrats heard members of their party consistently praise and defend Clinton, Republicans often encountered messages ranging from tepid support to open hostility toward Trump. Yet, many Republicans supported their party's candidate — early evidence indicates 90% of Republicans who voted cast a ballot for the Republican nominee.

This presents a puzzle: how did such a unique nominee result in such a typical outcome? The answer may partly lie in the powerful forces of partisanship and polarization. As the parties have moved increasingly distant ideologically, voters have sorted into partisan camps. As a result, partisanship matters more than it ever has and voters are reluctant to abandon their party. Indeed, recent elections have tended to be far more competitive than we observed in the middle of the 20th century. The 2016 election suggests that partisanship remains a powerful force.

The emotional brand wins

The 2016 US Presidential election proved the power of emotional branding, positioning and understanding the strategic conditions in which a campaign is run. Emotional brands build deep brand loyalty, have the power to go viral on social media and earn media thus reducing the need for a campaign to pay for media. Emotional branding, while making its users vulnerable to charges that they lack detail about their ideas, it fits with the fast moving world in which most voters live their lives. Emotional branding can be part of a positioning program. Both Sanders and Trump positioned themselves as outsiders and agents of change in a year in which many voters sought such qualities. While Sanders was the future oriented candidate of Revolution and Trump the nostalgic candidate of Restoration, their emotional branding programs positioned them well to compete in an unhappy country against a candidate selling stability and the status quo: Hillary Clinton.

#feelthebern

Bernie Sanders sought to pull the Democratic Party leftward and denying the nomination and control of the party to the centrist Clintons. Sanders targeted much of the Obama coalition. He stressed a "rigged" economy and game, bank reform, and presented voters with an America that was in need of a "political revolution". Under President Sanders things would be radically different as the bad behavior of the one percent, the big banks and Wall Street and the rich would follow the rules and pay their "fair share" of taxes and that free trade agreements would end. He proposed universal healthcare and free higher education. Sanders had a great appeal with a few segments of the electorate but couldn't expand and did not win.

#MAGA

Donald Trump had extent corporate and personal brands. For this campaign, he used a tag line first used by Ronald Reagan in 1980: "Let's Make America Great Again". The contents and attitudes of the Trump campaign were much closer to the silent majority messaging used by Richard Nixon. In the Trump emotional brand the country is under siege by liberals, elites, liberals, terrorists and illegal aliens. Like Sanders, Trump argued the system was "rigged" and offered himself as a corrective to that. He presented in a narrative in which Americans were much worse off and in more danger than they had been eight years earlier. Trump's policies were aimed at making the country safe and economically viable for average people again. Trump offered highly visual solutions to the nation's problems: building a wall, tearing up free trade agreements, banning Muslims from entering the country and using signs of his wealth and business experience to show that he alone could clean up Wall Street and turn the country around. He developed colorful names for his opponents like 'Lyin' Ted (Cruz), Little Marco (Rubio) and Crooked Hillary (Clinton). His tag line and its heritage were a positioning statement that the country needed to be improved again and resonated with older voters who remembered the Carter years and the Reagan Revolution as the corrective to those. Thus, a vote for Trump was a vote for change back to an America in which working class Americans could make good money, everyone spoke English, law and order prevailed, and the country was feared and respected around the world.

Conclusions

Trump and Sanders built emotional brands that created deep loyalty, inspired customer evangelism and generated a high level of enthusiasm about voting for them. Both Trump and Sanders were able to use social and earned media to get their message out efficiently and both staged mass events to bring their brands to life in highly emotive ways. If Sanders was the candidate of the future and the Revolution then Trump was the candidate of nostalgia and the Restoration. The Revolutionary and the Restorer both faced off against a candidate presenting herself as a continuation of the Obama legacy and upholder of the status quo. Hillary Clinton struggled in both contests. Her branding failed to motivate key Democratic audiences to vote. While stories were legion about the enthusiasm of the Sanders and Trump voters, Hillary Clinton struggled to build deep brand loyalty partly because of a lack of emotion that went right down to the hashtag: #imwithher. These failures mattered on election day when Trump won a huge number of working class whites, split on college educated whites, did well with female voters and showed great improvement with Hispanic and African-American voters versus what Mitt Romney had done four years earlier. Hillary Clinton's more stability oriented branding failed do the same. On Election Day, turnout amongst key Democratic audiences was down, Trump did just enough with his target audiences and the rest is history. The lesson of the cycle appears to be that strong emotional branding and how to position a such a brand in light of market conditions are more important than clearly thought out policy positions, political experience, more sober values like competence or stability or winning debates.

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Donald Trump's slogan betrays a renewed political fixation on the past

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At its most basic, all democratic politics could be described as a fight over the future. Different factions, parties or candidates propose competing visions for a society which would in some crucial way change it; the electorate assesses their ideas and decides which is the more desirable or feasible. But watching Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton grapple over America's future, it's clear that this model is breaking down. To different extents, both candidates have retreated into the past rather than facing the future.

Trump's famous and ubiquitous slogan is "make America great again". He gives only the sketchiest of outlines as to what this would entail: jobs and growth, a wall on the Mexican border, defeating Islamic State – all huge, ill-defined, and questionably feasibile.

The problems Trump identifies in today's America greatly outnumber his solutions. During the debates, Trump tossed out the word "again", the crux of his slogan, with compulsive insistence – "great again, safe again, wealthy again". In the third debate in Las Vegas, he declared he wanted to see the constitution enacted "the way it was meant to be".

The murky nostalgia of this claim is obvious. This is less a matter of moving forwards and more recovering something lost. That is why Trump doesn't really need to explain what his policies would actually be: the presumption is that Americans will know their former greatness when they see it. Campaigns like his bypass the arduous path of reasoning and set us on the easier but more treacherous terrain of instinct and emotion.

What we're seeing is a turn away from optimism, a vivid feeling among vast swathes of the electorate that the future no longer implies improvement, if indeed it ever did. This brand of politics has a long lineage – and Trump's nationalism is the direct descendant of a much older strand of far-right nationalism.

Just like old times

By the end of the 19th century, nationalist ideology was mutating, shedding its universalist skin and its often liberating intentions. In the 1890s it took on an inward-looking, essentialist incarnation: racialised, fearful, belligerent. This change is usually described as a shift from left to right, but that doesn't entirely grasp what was going on.

Such a change required nationalism to conceive the future in a fundamentally different way: it stopped representing opportunity and progress and started to connote threat and danger. Nationalists began to campaign on the promise they would protect their people from the ravages of modernity, whether in the form of increasing immigration or exploitation at work.

The resurgence of this scared, suspicious eyeing of the future is at the heart of the Trump campaign. As Will Davies argued, we have entered not only an age of post-truth politics but also an age of post-future politics. This is an argument that Davies convincingly applies to Brexit, too. Post-truth and post-future politics feed off one another: they form two sides of a coin whose only currency is fear and despair.

And what of Hillary Clinton? Did she offer an alternative vision, a future that stands for newness and progress? Not at all. Perhaps this isn't surprising given the amount of time she has spent in politics — it's unlikely that she would propose a complete break with a past in which she is so thoroughly embedded. Her emphasis on her experience, meticulously detailed in all three debates, trapped her in a bygone era.

Clinton's willingness to reference a direct return to or continuity of the other Clinton era was on full display in the first debate: "I think my husband did a pretty good job in the 1990s. I think a lot about what worked and how we can make it work again."

Sure enough, there's very little new about her proposed programme. Essentially, she advocates a return to a carefully delineated recent past of prosperity. It's a big contrast with Trump's fantasy of an all-encompassing paradise lost – but Clinton's is a recreation of the past nonetheless.

Past our prime

Politicians of all stripes have long invoked what they see as the glorious aspects of their countries' histories to bolster visions of the future. But the past is typically inspiration, not prescription. The revolutionaries of late-18th century France might have vaunted classical symbols and architecture, but they didn't use them to assemble a strict template for a return to a bygone age; they incorporated the aesthetic into a radical vision of the future. That is not the case in this year's presidential election.

What we are witnessing is a profound shift in the Western political landscape, a transformation by no means limited to the US. Sections of many electorates are losing faith in the idea of the future as we know it – something distinct from the past and the present alike, and which usually represents change for the better. Traditional establishment politicians have been all but paralysed by this development, while insurgent populists are eagerly fuelling it.

All the while, we're faced with problems of a new urgency and scale: widespread disenchantment, marginalisation, and division; the threat of jobs lost to automation; antibiotic resistance; climate change; displaced populations. It is unlikely that looking back to any past, however seductive, will help us solve these problems.

Dog whistles and dumpster fires

How do politicians appeal to a constituency over things that must not be mentioned in polite company? Things like racism, sexism, violence, and other forms of hatred?

They call in the dogs. Or, to be more precise, they blow dog whistles.

Zac Goldsmith was accused of blowing the whistle often during his unsuccessful campaign for the London mayoralty against Sadiq Khan. The tactics attributed to him, the Mirror said, "included writing to people whose surname was 'Singh' in the address book and warning Mr Khan was coming for their jewellery."

In the United States, Donald Trump, now the President-elect, was accused of blowing it frequently, as in when he suggested that "the Second Amendment people" could do something about Hillary Clinton's Supreme Court selections. If you believe in guns, the implication was, you could use them against a political opponent.

As elections get less civil, it's interesting to see how popular those "dog whistles" have become. This seemed to be the year that the "dog whistle" was heard the loudest.

A real dog whistle, of course, produces an ultrasonic sound that is too high for human hearing, but can be heard by dogs, cats, and other animals. That it was invented in 1876 by Sir Francis Galton seems appropriate, given that he also coined the term "eugenics," breeding selectively to produce preferred human traits.

Much human "dog whistling" seems aimed at people who would be interested in eugenics as well.

The Oxford English Dictionary says a dog whistle is "A statement or expression which in addition to its ostensible meaning has a further interpretation or connotation intended to be understood only by a specific target audience."

Urban Dictionary, entirely user generated and thus less "formal," is more direct, in a 2006 entry on "dog whistle comment": "A surreptitious inclusion of code words or phrases that will be heard by some of those listening, while not disturbing the other listeners, who may not appreciate the hidden message(s)."

As a political term, "dog whistle" has been around for a while, but no one is sure exactly how long. William Safire wrote about it in 2005, noting that The Economist attributed the expression to a political consultant in Australia. Safire found "dog whistle" in a March 1997 issue of The Australian newspaper, which attributed the phrase to, um, Americans.

But both the Americans and the Australians may have been late to the party. As the Merriam-Webster Words at Play blog notes, a columnist for the Ottawa Citizen, Jim Coyle, wrote in October 1995 that the term "special interest" was "an all-purpose dog-whistle that those fed up with feminists, minorities, the undeserving poor hear loud and clear." Eleven months later, Coyle wrote: "It would be nice to think the premier was merely being thoughtless, rather than calculating, that he was not blowing on that dog whistle that only racists hear."

As a political Twitter meme, "dog whistle" is right up there with "dumpster fire," referring to a spectacular failure, a cockup, a bloody mess.

A dumpster is a mobile trash container, introduced in the United States in the 1930s by the Dempster brothers, who coined the term. ("Dumpster" was a trademark until 2008.) For some reason, dumpsters catch on fire a lot. Though those fires usually are contained to the dumpster, they can be pretty spectacular, sending up lots of smoke and flames.

The term "dumpster fire" was added to the Oxford Dictionaries this year, with the definition "informal A chaotic or disastrously mishandled situation: *last season was a dumpster fire, and it didn't get that way overnight.*"

As that definition seems to indicate, "dumpster fire" as a metaphor may have had its roots in sports.

The Language Log blog says the earliest metaphorical use was in 2009 by the Washington Post sports writer Mike Wise, who told the Huffington Post that he'd heard it from a traffic reporter he used to work with. But "dumpster fires" appear in sports reports starting in November 2008, in such places as The Arizona Star ("The season that began as a dumpster fire…"). But many "dumpster fires" followed Wise's use as well, proving again how a good idiom (or cliché) can spread like wildfire.

The first political reference to a "dumpster fire" that we can find is even earlier, in a July 2008 post by Scott Smith on the Scholars and Rogues blog: "maybe, satire aside, this whole dumpster fire is bad for progressives fighting their way toward November." Smith says he heard the term on sports radio.

The term is becoming all-consuming. As the Oxford words blog noted:

"Although we see a fairly steady rise and fall in frequency through 2013 and 2014, usage runs unusually high between the beginning of last summer and the end of 2015. Curiously enough, Donald Trump just happened to announce his campaign for the presidency on June 16th of last year."

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How Donald Trump bullies with his body language

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As Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump ramp up for their third and final televised debate, people are still trying to make sense of what happened at their second one. It was an odd sort of presidential debate, maybe the oddest ever – and it was certainly the ugliest and most tawdry.

Mere days after the release of a video in which Trump bragged about using his celebrity status to grab women by their genitals without consent, he was already collapsing in the polls. He responded by parading a number of women who have accused Bill Clinton of inappropriate sexual behaviour in the past, then bringing them along to the debate in an effort to both embarrass him and unsettle Hillary Clinton.

At first, at least, it seemed to work. You didn't need to be a body language expert to see the discomfort on Bill Clinton's face when he was led into the auditorium and seated in the front row.

Now Trump is seeing his numbers slide into the terminal zone, he's increasingly resorting to the psychological tricks of the pugilistic. All boxers have little games they like to play to unsettle their opponents. They don't see it as cheating; it's just part of the game. That's how Trump seems to think.

But Trump also has a penchant for name-calling, something boxers only resort to when they're desperate. He's called Clinton "Crooked Hillary" hundreds of times before on Twitter and in speeches to sympathetic crowds, but at the second debate he went so far as to call her a liar to her face multiple times. Anything for an advantage. Anything to rattle your opponent.

Their latest encounter was debating as street fighting, a metaphor widely used in the run-up to the debate. The idea was so pervasive it turned into a metaphorical frame that affected what we saw and what we noticed, and even how we judged the outcome of this battle.

Various commentators summed up Trump's debate performances by speculating that he might have "stopped the bleeding" from the Republican faithful, despite his comments about how he views and treats women ("locker room talk, folks").

Trump's body language went through several periods of transition in the debate. Having to hold a microphone interferes with the natural two-handed gestures on which he relies heavily. We can all recognise them: arms outstretched, arms pointing downwards, palms forward, characteristically signalling his connection with the common man through the distinctive, demonstrative gestures of New York – gestures that work because they speak straight to the usually unconscious nonverbal system.

Trump is quite expert at using some gestures and sequences of gestures in particular. First comes a barrier signal: arms up, palms out. 'Beware', it says. 'Danger'. Then he uses a precision hand gesture – a distinctive thumb-and-forefinger position – which alternates with an L-shaped gesture. The danger signal produces an immediate emotional effect, then he reassures the audience with his precision gesture. "I've got a plan," he says nonverbally, "a precise plan. It's time for a change."

Slicing and pointing, that's what Trump can do, at least when he's not forced to hold a microphone in one hand as he was at the second debate. I was surprised he didn't complain about this, since he complained about everything else: the "bias" of the moderators, "it's three against one", the fact that Clinton got more time – anything, like a child who thinks that the world isn't fair.

Looking tired, he started quietly rocking on his feet as Clinton spoke, a telltale sign of negative emotion leaking out nonverbally. Clearly he wasn't comfortable with the fallout from the leaked tape. He started sniffing when he talked, as he did throughout the first debate. It's a distraction, and it noticeably gets more pronounced when he's on the spot.

He started gesturing demonstratively for the first time when he talked about his wealth. 'Batonic' gestures – stress-timed gestures that have no iconic content, such as the up-and-down beat of a hand – tend to mark out content that's highly significant for the speaker, but when Trump begins his personal attacks, the more complex and abstract metaphoric gestures start up in earnest. These are a core part of Trump's implicit message, and they have an immediate effect. Their meaning is processed simultaneously with his speech.

As he went on the attack in the debate, his use of beat gestures duly increased. He chopped, he pointed, he sliced. Trump was now fully armed. He heckled, he interrupted, he glowered as Clinton talked, issuing a nonverbal running commentary on what she was saying.

All in all, this was a bully's performance, a physical attempt to dominate Clinton and manipulate our interpretation of her words. Clinton quoted Michelle Obama's "When they go low, we go high", but with Trump expressing himself as he did – stalking her as she talked, prowling behind her like a big beast of the jungle – the tone of the encounter remained firmly at the lower end of the scale.

The American linguist George Lakoff has commented that Trump "uses your brain against you". Much of everyday thought is unconscious, and it's that psychological spot that Trump targets, much as a boxer or street fighter does.

The fact that he got us all thinking that only a 'knockout' would constitute success for Hillary Clinton was therefore a victory of sorts. He was on the ropes that night, and he knew it; in the end he bobbed and weaved to fight another day, despite everything we now know about this most unpresidential of men. Nonetheless, his poll ratings slid after each performance.

Analysing debate questions: is it time to rethink the town hall?

Moderators Anderson Cooper of CNN and Martha Raddatz of ABC News spent the second presidential debate wrestling gamely with the candidates and a vociferous audience for control of the evening, leaving the undecided voters on the stage largely redundant. A feature of the election cycle since 1992, the town-hall style was judged by some to be "the biggest loser of last night's debate."

Fewer questions, fewer good ones

The intention behind the town hall format is to bring candidates into closer contact with voters. At times that has proved insightful, as in 1992, when Bill Clinton won plaudits for his empathetic response to a question about the personal impact of the national debt. In the three cycles that followed, audience members peppered candidates with at least 15 questions per debate. However, the scattershot nature of their queries led to an adjustment of the rules in 2008.

Beginning with the Obama-McCain town hall, moderators were granted leeway to follow up on points raised by the candidates' responses to voters, resulting in an average five fewer audience questions. The goal was to foster a more sustained discussion, but with moderators taking a more active role, the audience becomes ancillary to the proceedings.

The power transfer, from audience to moderators, was particularly acute during the second presidential debate, with Cooper and Raddatz forcefully asserting themselves - and the audience fading into the background. That night, eight of the 11 questions came from undecided voters on the stage, with the remaining questions chosen from those submitted online. Cooper and Raddatz were aggressive with their follow-ups, piggybacking on every question until the final minutes, when they attempted to fit in as many audience members as possible. When the moderators did turn to the voters, those questions largely seemed lacking both in scope and substance. "Do you believe you can be a devoted President to all the people in the United States?" isn't exactly probing, and it allowed both candidates to shift into versions of their stump speeches. However, viral sensation Ken Bone did ask insightfully and concisely about energy policy, and Gorbah Hamed forced Donald Trump to directly confront the Islamophobia in which his campaign has trafficked.

Topics missed

The town hall debate normally serves as an opportunity for citizens to address personal issues they are grappling with, but after two debates this cycle a number of topics remained unaddressed. Equal pay and the minimum wage, for example, were not mentioned in either of the first two presidential debates. The issue was last asked during a question once during the 2012 debates. Additionally, many social issues remained on the sidelines, including LGBTQ rights, abortion, and the war on drugs. Most noticeable in their absence were immigration and gun control. Trump and Clinton both managed to sneak in some talk about their stance on immigration following a question posed by a woman who identified herself as a Muslim American. The core of her question, however, was about feeling safe given the islamophobia in this country. Both nominees used it as an opportunity to address their thoughts and policies on immigration. As for gun control, the topic was not broached throughout the course of the 90-minute debate – despite 55% of Americans favouring stricter gun laws, according to a CNN/ORC poll. In the Twittersphere, many people were upset that no questions about policing surfaced during this debate.

Personal characteristics again in focus

The main topic of the night, as in the first debate, was the candidates themselves. Perhaps unavoidably, the voters wanted to hear the candidates defend their character, and attack their opponent's, following a week that saw revelations about Donald Trump's tax holiday, Hillary Clinton's public versus private stances, and—most disturbingly—a newly released recording of Trump asserting he is entitled to sexually assault women.

The first two questions, along with several follow-ups from the moderators, focused on the candidates' behaviour, past statements, and judgment. It was not until more than 24 minutes into the evening that a question was asked about policy, when an audience member asked about healthcare.

Overall, five of the 11 questions posed by the audience in the hall and those culled from the web touched on aspects of temperament. With more than 40 percent of the questions from this year's two debates coming on the topic, 2016 has seen an unprecedented focus on character.

A longer version of this article originally appeared in Columbia Journalism Review, reproduced with permission.

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Image bites, voter enthusiasm, and the 2016 Presidential Election

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At the outset of this analysis, let's be clear about one thing: there are dark reasons for Donald Trump's rise. Among these, a nativist, sexist, patriarchal, and ethnocentrist view of the country, and a campaign based on fanciful promises beyond the power of any President to make good on—jobs, walls, trade agreements, repeal of established laws, and abandonment of strategic global alliances. Lack of specifics and news media complacency in pressing Trump about policy, potential cabinet appointments, and plans to investigate Clinton also worked to his advantage, as his candidacy became an ill-defined canvas onto which disgruntled and fearful voters could project their hopes and assuage their anxieties.

Beyond his campaign promises, which were among the least defined and coherent in contemporary political history, Trump's nonverbal communication was quite consistent: angry, defiant, outraged, and disgusted with the political status quo. Although he was undisciplined in his use of facial displays and gestures, fulminating one minute and flailing the next, Trump managed to project ample amounts of outrage in his nonverbal behavior and that clear display of anger gave discontented voters who were not on board with the Clinton agenda something to rally around.

By contrast, Clinton's expressions were much more controlled, diplomatic, reassuring, and polite. During the debates, which she by all accounts won, Clinton outlasted Trump's antics by exuding a calm determination that was buttressed by sharp retorts. It was a diplomatic style with little populist appeal. Except for small glimpses of genuine emotion—the much-heralded "shimmy" towards the end of the first debate, a delightful rallying cry in the rain at the very end of the campaign—her expressive behavior was not a great ally. She strove to project likeability and competence but her high negatives in opinion polls demanded a much more empathetic and still forceful approach.

Clinton did go on the attack at times during the campaign, notably during the third presidential debate against Trump, but she did so more in the condescending mode of an attorney cross-examining a witness than a champion of the people. That subtle but discernible contempt, which perhaps serves as a competence cue for supporters, was likely read as arrogance by Independents and weak partisans and could have hurt her in the end. In an election process that rests on turnout, as this one so agonizingly did, enthusiasm—which gets people to the polls—trumps competence.

While Clinton generated sufficient enthusiasm for a lower volume election (she *did* win the popular vote, after all) she had less success holding together the coalition of Black, Hispanic, and younger voters that Obama built in previous elections—even with the president *and* Michelle Obama campaigning on her behalf. In part, she struggled to convince because she struggled to effectively emote.

Meanwhile, Trump emoted in loud attacks, wild accusations, empty promises, and outrageous nonverbal antics. He energized his base enough to get out and vote in states that mattered. Key to his success: Trump's expressions were unambiguous. His message of defiance and threat came across blunt and clear, even with the sound off. Whether by design or happenstance, Trump's confrontational style of campaigning bonded supporters to his cause.

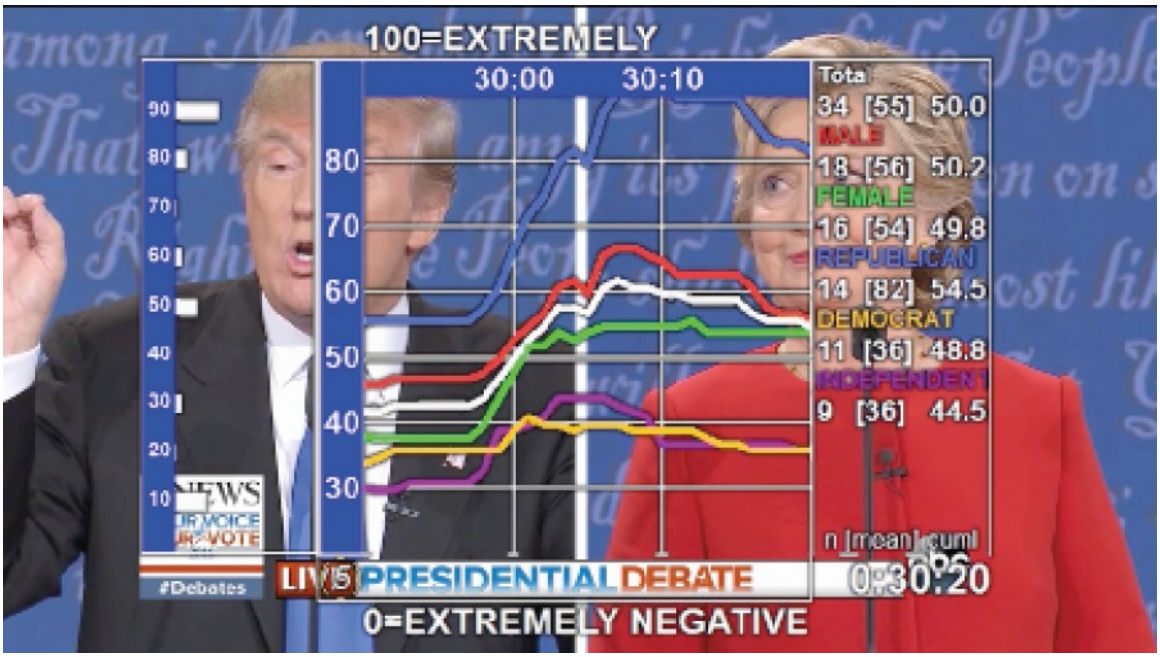
Trump's "go to" expression is an anger/threat display—a menacing expression characterized by fixed stares and visible anger that signals competitive or hostile intent. Research has shown that threat displays are particularly effective with supporters but anathema to critics and undecideds. We witnessed this firsthand in dial tests conducted during the presidential debates with dozens of Texas voters. Republican Party identifiers expressed much more enthusiasm for Trump than Democrats ever did for Clinton.

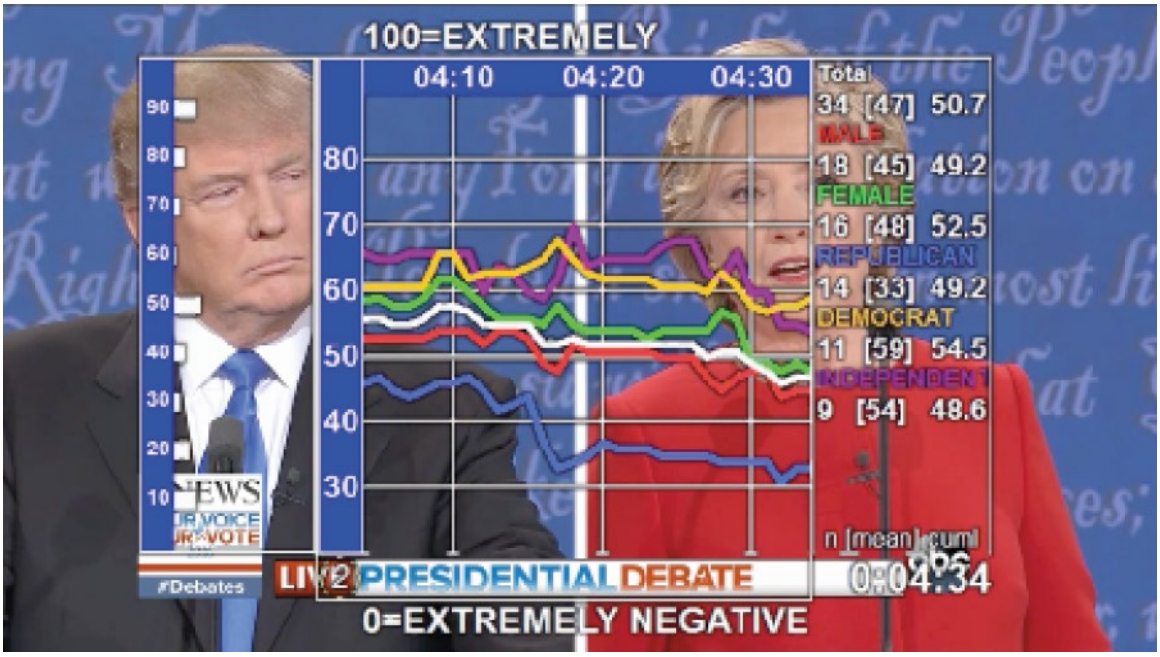
The screen captures opposite illustrate the high level of positive sentiment that Trump supporters felt while watching their candidate go on the attack against Clinton during the first debate (see top panel, Figure 1). In this moment, Trump deflects a question about releasing his taxes and focuses instead on the thousands of emails that Clinton purportedly deleted before handing over her private server to the FBI. The blue line, which peaks over 90 points on a 100-point sentiment scale, represents not just Republican support but genuine voter enthusiasm.

By contrast, Democratic voters never surpassed the 70-point mark in response to Clinton, and on average felt less positively toward her than Republicans felt towards Trump (see yellow line, bottom panel). Interestingly, Independent voters responded negatively and critically to Trump's anger/threat displays (see purple line, top panel), a trend that was reflected in polls following the first debate that showed weakening support among Independents.

But defections among weak partisans were not in numbers sufficient enough to derail his campaign, although Trump appeared to be all but finished until the late October surprise of the FBI's discovery of yet more emails from Clinton's private server. Clinton was exonerated a week later, just a few days before the election, but the FBI director's reminder was all the opening Trump needed to reanimate his attacks, energize his base for one last push, and infuse his tirades against her alleged untrustworthiness with a sense of renewed force.

Figure 1. Peak ratings of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton during the first presidential debate.





Air war? Campaign advertising in the 2016 Presidential Election

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In many respects, the 2016 Presidential Election was unlike any other. One particularly unique feature of the campaign was a sizable asymmetry in the number of advertisements aired on behalf of each of the major party candidates.

Despite being vastly outspent on the airwaves, President-Elect Donald Trump won more than 300 votes in the Electoral College. However, his victory should not imply that political advertisements are ineffective at winning votes. Instead, the final election tally begs scholars and observers of American politics to rethink conventional wisdom about campaigning on television.

In what follows, I raise (and attempt to answer) several questions about the state of advertising in 2016 and its implications for what scholars know about their effectiveness.

A War on the Airwaves?

If the 2016 campaign was a battle for control of the airwaves, the fight was one sided (at best). While both sides saw fewer advertisements aired on their behalf than did each respective party nominee in 2012, data from the Wesleyan Media Project (WMP) suggests that pro-Clinton airings (489,142 from June 8 - October 30, 2016) were about three times greater than pro-Trump airings (99,441). Clinton's dominance on the airwaves held fairly steady throughout the campaign. In contrast to the view that Trump might make a late push to flood the airwaves with advertisements before the campaign concluded, WMP data show that pro-Clinton advertisements outnumbered pro-Trump ads by nearly 2:1 in the final two weeks of the campaign.

There were also several important asymmetries in the sponsorship of advertisements on both sides. While candidates sponsored the majority of all ads aired in their favor, Clinton received substantial help from interest groups (more than ninety thousand airings in her favor), whereas Donald Trump received absolutely none (although several interest groups were actively involved in airing anti-Clinton advertisements). Interestingly, Donald Trump aired fewer advertisements overall than did Bernie Sanders in the Democratic Primary, and the overall tone of ads aired were somewhat more positive than those aired in 2012.

Does Campaign Advertising Change Minds?

In the past, political scientists have found that asymmetries in advertising totals have important consequences for candidates' electoral fates. Several scholars have demonstrated that advertising advantages can increase support for a candidate, even independently of mobilization efforts "on the ground." Political scientists John Sides and Lynn Vavreck find that support tends to respond to short-term airing advantages. But, because candidates typically keep pace with each others' advertising spending, these effects usually cancel out.

The 2016 election offers a unique opportunity for scholars to study a campaign in which advertising was more one-sided, and may prove to turn conventional wisdom on its head. Consistent with conventional wisdom, Donald Trump picked up narrow, and unanticipated, victories in Wisconsin and Michigan; states where he held moderate to high advertising advantages in the final two weeks of the campaign, in some media markets. Further, the candidate with the most advertisements aired on her behalf also won the popular vote.

Yet, there is also reason to rethink the conventional wisdom. In some states where Clinton held heavy advertising advantages in the final weeks of the campaign (e.g., Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Florida), she ultimately lost. Further, Trump's advertising edges in Virginia and Colorado during the same timeframe ultimately did not win him either state.

How will Scholars Make Sense of 2016?

We can never truly know what the popular and state vote totals would have looked like had political advertising not been present. One way to ascertain the effectiveness will be to turn to public opinion surveys collected after the final vote was tallied.

Political advertisements create "naturally occurring" experiments on a daily basis, because media markets often cross state boundaries. If voters live in markets that receive substantial advertising because they overlap with a battleground state (where candidates will also have strong ground games), but do not actually live in a battleground state themselves, it is possible to isolate the effect of advertising independently of other factors that might also shape vote choice.

For example, the Erie market in Pennsylvania (a battleground state) overlaps with New York (a strongly Democratic state). In the final two weeks of the campaign, Trump held a significant advertising advantage in Erie. If voters in that part of New York became more likely to vote for Trump at the election's conclusion, advertisements may have indeed shaped their vote choice.

Advertisements also have the potential to do more than alter citizens' vote intentions. Exposure to campaign advertising has been shown to boost citizens' knowledge about ,and interest in, the presidential campaign, for example.

The 2016 Election will almost certainly challenge conventional wisdom about presidential campaign advertising. Scholars now have an opportunity to empirically which aspects of conventional wisdom were upheld, and which need further attention.

US election: what impact do celebrity endorsements really have?

In one of the most astonishing U.S. elections in modern political history, Donald Trump became the 45th President of the United States. Relying largely on opinion polls and over 1,000 celebrity endorsers, including Beyoncé and Katy Perry, election forecasters put Hilary Clinton's chance of winning at 70% to 99%. Oprah Winfrey's endorsement of Obama in 2008 increased the contributions received by Obama, and an estimated 1 million additional votes. So what role did celebrity endorsement play?

Use of Celebrities in Politics

Historians have traced the role of celebrities in politics back to the 1920 U.S. election, when Lillian Russell and other film stars endorsed Warren Harding. In 1960, John F. Kennedy was endorsed by Rat Pack members Sammy Davis junior and Dean Martin. More recently, Oprah Winfrey and George Clooney supported Barack Obama. Actor Clint Eastwood, endorsed Republicans John McCain in 2008 and Donald Trump this time around.

Who endorsed who?

Both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump have been endorsed by an army of celebrity supporters. Some of Clinton's high-profile endorsers were LeBron James, Meryl Streep, Lady Gaga, Lena Dunham, and Snoop Dogg. In contrast, Trump's supporters were less well-known and included Azealia Banks, Tom Brady, Mike Tyson, Hulk Hogan, and Scott Baio.

Hilary's celebrity endorsers had a greater social media reach and made powerful statements such as Elizabeth Banks' Fight Song or the star-studded Avengers cast's oblique but powerful statement against Trump.

Celebrities sell

One in five ads globally features a celebrity. Marketers spend millions on celebrity endorsers to leverage "secondary brand associations" – that is, people transfer their opinions and feelings about a celebrity to the brand (e.g., Beyonce and Pepsi – worth US$50 million).

In a cluttered world where myriad messages fight for the attention of time-starved consumers, celebrity endorsers serve as arbiters of public opinion. Marketers rely on symbolic and emotional features to generate "sociopsychological associations". Some celebrities are so aspirational that even a glimpse of them in an ad conveys positive meaning (e.g., Cristiano Ronaldo).

In order to transfer positive meaning, the celebrity, should have the following traits:

- attractiveness (physique, intellect, athleticism, lifestyle);
- credibility (expertise, trustworthiness); and
- meaning transfer (compatibility between brand and celebrity).

Quite often, celebrities use their high profile to promote causes, like singer Bono's One campaign against poverty.

Celebrity endorsements in politics makes sense

We know celebrities grab and hold consumer attention. Yet, expertise and credibility are important elements when wanting to influence consumers. Interestingly, people consider celebrities to be more credible and trustworthy than politicians.

Young people believe celebrities have an effect on the way people think – more than politicians, scientists or academics. Exit polls of 24,537 respondents in the 2016 U.S. election showed that the 18-29 year old segment was the smallest (12%) with 55% voting for Clinton, while 53% of 45-64 year olds, the largest segment (40%) voted for Trump. Outside of age, ethnicity and gender affect celebrity endorsement influence. Of the surveyed women, 54% voted for Clinton, and 53% of men voted for Trump. Most of the surveyed voters were White (70%) and of those, 58% voted for Trump, while most of the Black (88%), Latino (65%) and Asian voters (65%) voted for Clinton. On the whole, Clinton received a higher number of overall votes (47.8%), however, due to the Electoral College system, Trump was elected president.

Effectiveness and audience

A key difference in the 2016 U.S. election was that Trump was also a celebrity in his own right. People's experience of his public persona through his roles on TV has over time instilled a specific meaning which was transferred to his political campaign. Furthermore, Trump had a clear message centred on change, with an anti-establishment bent. In contrast, Clinton embodied the establishment and was considered untrustworthy due to accusations during her time as Secretary of State and her family's charity the Clinton Foundation.

So what's the final verdict?

Having the endorsement of celebrities is not enough. There has to be a match-up (or compatibility) between the celebrity and the brand (or politician). For instance the Hu collection, by Pharrell Williams and Adidas Originals, has the necessary credible context. On the other hand, Scarlett Johannson's endorsement of Sodastream failed to solidify the relationship while losing Johannson her Oxfam ambassador position.

With the right celebrity endorsements, political campaigns can do quite well. However, they need to establish a clear connection between the politician and celebrity endorsing them. Otherwise, the message comes across as disingenuous and irrelevant at best.

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The backlash of the loose cannon: musicians and the celebrity cleavage

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Back in February 2016 *The Guardian* published an article claiming that if the US were 'a rockocracy' then the 2016 election would already be over, with Hillary and Bill back in the White House. This pretty much sums up the tune of the 2016 US presidential election. Musicians overwhelmingly aligned with Clinton and trumpeted against Trump. Yet, with what effect?

While the power of music in politics is a well-established fact, the actual influence of celebrities in election campaigns is not that straight-forward. Nonetheless, the assumed ability of the stars to harvest voters' support offered reason enough for US politicians to recruit celebrities to their campaigns. While this is historically true for both Democrats and Republicans, it was only with Bill Clinton and especially with Barack Obama that celebrity endorsement has become more massive and potentially more influential.

Obama's relationship with celebrity musicians has been especially creative, outgrowing the usual 'photo ops and rally performances' mix and moving into a number of new formats. Songs of appreciation for Obama (e.g. Young Jeezy 'My President'), the Emmy-winning music video 'Yes We Can' produced by the will.i.am, the frontman of the Black Eyed Peas and Bruce Springsteen's epic Obama-endorsing tours are most paradigmatic.

Hilary Clinton continued the trend of celebrity crowding in 2016. The names she gathered in her music camp were impressive: Jay-Z, Kanye West, Beyoncé, Katie Perry, Christina Aguilera, Cher, Jon Bon Jovi, Mariah Carey, Ice-T, Elton John, Lady Gaga, Jennifer Lopez, Ricky Martin, Madonna, Morrissey, Snoop Dogg, 50 Cent, Sting, Barbra Streisand, Bruce Springsteen and many others.

However, the musicians' endorsement for Clinton for the most part lacked the devotion and energy that accompanied their support for Obama. Support for Clinton seemed largely a corollary of campaigning against Trump - it was the 'right thing to do', rather than a passionate act of advocacy. Los Angeles rapper Ty Dolla $ign, probably nailed it by saying that while 'nobody is excited' about Clinton, she has his vote.

Donald Trump, on the other hand, gathered a scant group of celebrity supporters, with Clint Eastwood, Hulk Hogan and the country singer Loretta Lynn being the most renowned. However, Trump was extremely successful in mobilising the 'don't let Trump win' campaign.

A number of musicians refused to allow him to play their songs in his campaign (Adele, Neil Young, Rolling Stones) or were utterly irritated by Trump asking permission to use their music (REM's Michael Stipe). Pink Floyd's Roger Waters held a concert with the 'Trump is a pig' sign on the stage while Springsteen called him 'a moron'. Particularly interesting is the ambiguous relationship between hip hop musicians and Trump. Once hailed in the rap songs as a symbol of wealth, Trump turned into a loathed figure. Next to YD's FDT (F**k Donald Trump), Eminem's *Campaign Speech* was probably the strongest anti-Trump rap song in the campaign: 'and that's what you wanted, a f**kin' loose cannon who's blunt with his hand on the button, who doesn't have to answer to no one – great idea!'

What then are the key music lessons of the 2016 election?

First, the 2016 campaign suggests that celebrity musicians' endorsement has irreversibly penetrated the political mainstream. The rise of social media accelerated this process by upgrading musicians from potentially prominent points of influence into powerful channels of reach. For example, on the day preceding the Election Day a version of the Beyoncé's video *I am with her* that endorsed Clinton had 757 thousand views (and 7300 shares) on the official Clinton's Facebook fan page but 2.3 million views (and 16 700 shares) on the singer's fan page. The views and shares were gathered in only one day and although Clinton and Beyoncé posted somewhat different versions of the video, the discrepancy is apparent and points to a challenging conclusion: through musicians' social media platforms politicians can potentially reach an audience they can only dream of reaching through conventional political communication platforms or traditional media.

Secondly, no candidate in recent US history has been as successful in mobilising the anti-candidate campaign as Donald Trump. Musicians (including the usual 'rage against the machine' hip hop crew) massively aligned against Trump and consequently, supported Hilary Clinton. Therefore, musicians' support for Clinton was rather a movement against Trump's aggressive, insulting and chauvinist populism than the typical candidate endorsement. The Manichean rift between bearable Clinton and unacceptable Trump was the key base of musicians' mobilisation. Still, despite massive recruitment against him, Donald Trump won the election. The 'celebrity cleavage' that is becoming an ever more prominent variable in campaign studies was in this election heavily biased towards Clinton, but did not reflect the actual political cleavages. Moreover, by becoming part of 'the mainstream', music was defeated by enraged populism, clearly the biggest winner of the 2016 election.

The curious case of Jill Stein

Americans value environmentalism and want to see more of it. But Jill Stein, the Green Party presidential candidate, drew only 1 percent of the popular vote, even in an election where many voters disliked the major candidates. Stein certainly differentiated herself from the two major party candidates. She asserted that electing Clinton would be as bad as electing Trump.

While Stein makes anti-establishment statements, her German counterparts have been advancing a green agenda for the past 30 years. There are two reasons why the U.S. Green Party remains so marginal. Structurally, the American electoral system is heavily weighted against small political parties. But U.S. Greens also harm themselves by failing to understand that governing requires compromise.

Both European and North American Green Parties evolved from activist movements in the 1960s that focused on causes including environmentalism, disarmament, nuclear power, nonviolence, reproductive rights and gender equality. The German Green Party's rise owed much to the country's electoral system. Proportional representation makes it possible for small parties to gain a toehold and build a presence in government over time. In contrast, U.S. elections award seats on a winner-takes-all basis. Third parties often have trouble even getting their candidates' names onto ballots.

U.S. Greens have won only a handful of state-level races, and have never won a congressional seat. Their greatest success came in 2000, when Ralph Nader won 2.7 percent of the popular vote in the presidential election. Many argued that Nader's only real impact was to throw the election to George W. Bush, but Nader and many of his supporters strongly disagreed, and the question of whether Stein impacted the election's outcome remains controversial today.

In order to graduate from an opposition party to a ruling party, German Greens had to develop a capacity for compromise and form coalitions with center-left Social Democrats. But coalitions require consensus. Interacting with centrist politicians, unionists, church representatives and the media taught greens to act less like activists and more like politicians. In 1998 the Green Party formed a so-called red-green coalition with the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and won a large majority in the Bundestag.

Working through this alliance, former activists implemented an environmentally driven tax code and brokered a deal with the nuclear energy industry to cancel projects for new plants and phase out nuclear power by 2022.

Although the Green Party has not regained control of Germany's federal government since 2005, its positions have become part of the nation's mainstream political culture. Notably, after the 2011 nuclear plant meltdown in Fukushima, Japan, a center-right German government decided to accelerate the phaseout of nuclear power. To reach this goal, Angela Merkel's centrist government has implemented a policy bundle known as the Energiewende that seeks to transition Germany to a nonnuclear, low-carbon energy future.

Massive governmental support for alternative energy sources has encouraged Germans, especially in rural areas, to invest in solar power, wind turbines and biomass plants. These green policies did not harm, and may have buoyed, Merkel's status as one of the most popular German chancellors prior to this year's controversies over immigration.

There is no easy way for the U.S. Green Party to emulate its German counterparts. Because the American political system makes it difficult for third parties to participate, Green Party candidates do not have opportunities to learn the trade of politics. They have remained activists who are true to their base instead of developing policy positions that would appeal to a broader audience. By doing so, they weaken their chances of winning major races even in liberal strongholds.

As a result, green ideas enter American political debates only when Democrats and Republicans take up these issues. It is telling that major U.S. environmental groups started endorsing Clinton even before she had clinched the Democratic presidential nomination over Bernie Sanders, who took more aggressive positions on some environmental and energy issues during their primary contest. And although Sanders identifies as an environmentalist, he sought the Democratic Party nomination instead of running as the Green Party candidate.

Running on a third-party ticket in the United States remains a flawed strategy to shaping a green message aimed at a broad electorate. Instead, climate change, dwindling energy resources and growing human and economic costs from natural disasters will do more to promote ecological consciousness and political change in mainstream America than the radical rhetoric of the U.S. Green Party.

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The Green Party effect in the US 2016 Election

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In the long shadow of Donald Trump's victory in the November 8th election, Jill Stein's bid as Green Party Presidential candidate is likely to be a forgotten footnote to a momentous turning point in US history.

Polling at around two percent before the election the Greens had campaigned hard through social media and alternative news sources to build on the radical, anti-establishment popularity of Bernie Sanders, especially amongst young voters. They hoped to win five percent of the vote which would have unlocked automatic ballot access in many states and much needed campaign funding worth up to $10 million. However, while over a million people voted Green on November 8th, an improvement on the last election, this still only represented around one percent of the popular vote.

Yet that one percent may have been decisive. In the key battleground states of Wisconsin and Michigan, Stein's vote total was more than Trump's margin of victory. Of course, this does not mean Green voters would have turned up to vote for Clinton had Stein not been on the ballot. As Jessica McBride notes in a state by state analysis for Heavy.com the combined third party vote in Florida and Pennsylvania was also more than Trump's margin of victory, but Gary Johnson's appeal was more likely with Republicans than Democrats. Second guessing US voters' intentions retrospectively is impossible, but the perceived threat that Stein might pull enough Democrat voters away from Hillary Clinton – in the way that Ralph Nader did in the 2000 Bush-Gore contest - never really materialised.

This was not the nail-bitingly close election result of 2000 where the Green vote arguably cost the Al Gore the Presidency. Instead, pollsters watched their predictions of a Clinton win reduced to worthless confetti (yet again). Trump picked up white working-class votes former Democrat strongholds, and benefitted from relatively low enthusiasm and Democrat turnout, especially in the so-called rustbelt states afflicted by economic decline and poverty.

A poll recently published in *The Independent* claimed that Bernie Sanders would have 'crushed' Trump by 56-44 had he been the Democrat Presidential candidate. While the poll, commissioned by Sanders supporting Democratic Congressman Alan Grayson, is almost certainly over-optimistic, it is certainly the case that Millennial enthusiasm for Bernie's socialist message – identical in many key respects to that of the Greens – did not easily translate into support for Hillary Clinton. It also did not translate into the kind of mass enthusiasm for Green Party policies that might have transformed the Party into a major player.

The next four years could see a progressive alliance of Democrats and Greens fighting Trump on issues of social and environmental justice – enthusing young voters to come out and defeat Trump in 2020. However, Green antipathy to the Democratic Party means that this is unlikely even with a left-leaning environmentalist at the head of the party. Much depends on the direction of the Democrats – either behind more progressive figures such as Elizabeth Warren or back towards more 'establishment' leaders such as Andrew Cuomo. Either way, the Greens may prove big enough to dent Democrat fortunes again, but not big enough to make the break through needed to challenge America's two party stranglehold on politics.

US presidential candidate selection

The procedure for selecting a candidate to run for president is a convoluted system. The process of candidate selection is organised through either caucuses or primaries, states choose either one of these systems to decide on their nominee. Essentially, the nominee is slowly narrowed from a list of prospective candidates. After an extensive process of campaigning, debates and public exposure, the candidate will have been selected through a series of votes.

Hilary has become the candidate for the Democrats because of her electability over Sanders, Sanders being too different, and radical for many. She has also been a key member of the American governing system for many years, taking roles such as senator and secretary of state. On many issues, Clinton has shown herself to be the more moderate of the two, choosing to take quite a soft line on the legal position of marijuana by reducing its status as an illegal substance, where Sanders believed in letting the states decide whether it should be legal or not. Sanders also believed that the death penalty should be abolished, where Clinton believed in just a reduction in its use.

Donald Trump has become the candidate for the republicans because of his views on the failings of the American system in the past, and the rhetoric with which he has lead his campaign, feeding the fears of immigration, and basically being in opposition to the past American system. He promises a strong America, one that focuses on the strengths of American people. He has said on many occasions that he wants to build a wall in order to provide more separation between America and Mexico. Furthermore, he claims he will be able to make Mexico pay for it. Cruz, one-time frontrunner, was, among other candidates, fairly uncharismatic, being unable to expand his support base in the way Trump was. Like with Sanders, Cruz was just too far off centre to consider for nomination being too much of a staunch conservative. People also found Cruz to be too boring to be nominee, being unable to relate to voters enough to garner significant voting support. Other candidates surpassed by Trump include Marco Rubio and Jeb Bush. Trump proved throughout the contest to be particularly skilful in the way he presented his image and the emotive way he delivered his speeches. His charismatic speaking and public image make him anything but boring, which drew the attention of the media and the public.

Unfortunately, neither are particularly attractive candidates, many voters are argued to be simplifying the election to being a contest to find the lesser of two evils. This dissatisfaction with the way the presidential elections are going is reflected by the choice of many to opt for a third vote. This is mentioned in the Guardian (2016), which details the names of the Green Party's Jill Stein and Libertarian's Gary Johnson. Even as the choice polarises many voters declare their choice is driven by antipathy or opposition to the alternative than strong support for the presidential candidate they have chosen.

Now that we have these two candidates, they will enter a more competitive process of trying to win over states. Certain states have been historically set in their ways, always voting for the same party, so campaigning is not so intense in these areas although both candidates appear to be creating new battlegrounds despite historical patterns. Finally, now that Donald Trump has been elected president, he will be fully in office the following January. This is called the presidential inauguration which is the specific start date for the elected president's term. So by the end of the coming January, the most powerful nation in the world will have to establish a new leader, Donald Trump, in an environment of unstable international affairs. Many are feeling disenfranchised by the two presidential candidates, because of the way that the system currently works, bringing into the question whether reform of the electoral system should be considered. All in all, the new president has been voted as Donald Trump, so we now have four years to see the effect that he will have on America.

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3

Policy

Trump-Clinton was expected to be close: the economy said so

Conventional wisdom is that fringe candidates get repudiated, à la 1964 and 1972. The story isn't so simple.

While Hillary Clinton is the consensus of most Democrats, from activists on up to the establishment, Donald Trump was the Republican candidate whom many Republicans wanted to avoid. From this perspective, Trump's position resembled that of Barry Goldwater in 1964 and George McGovern in 1972, two ideologically extreme candidates—Goldwater on the right and McGovern on the left—who were handicapped by strong opposition within their parties, limped through their campaigns, and got destroyed by over 20 percentage points in the general election. To add to the analogy, these candidates' opponents—Presidents Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon—were, like Hillary Clinton, viewed by many voters as cynical, calculating politicians rather than inspiring leaders. Those two years, 1964 and 1972, still stand as cautionary lessons about the fate of any fringe candidate who manages to grab the presidential nomination without having secured the backing of his party's establishment.

But Donald Trump defied political gravity. How could this be?

The biggest difference between 2016 and 1964/1972 has nothing to do with the candidates or the conventions or ideology or endorsements or the fracturing of political parties. It turns out that, according to many years of research from political scientists, the most important determinants of presidential elections in the past half-century or more have not been the character or political ideology of candidates, or even the strengths of their parties, but rather the state of the economy. To emphasize the key role of the economy in setting the stage for presidential elections is not to be an economic determinist. Regression models predicting the election outcome from the economy have large error terms. But the economics-based forecast is a good starting point.

And here's what was special about 1964 and 1972: These were two of the three strongest years for the economy in the postwar era, with per-capita income growth in the 4 percent range, and the candidates running for re-election—Johnson and Nixon—won in landslides, as would be predicted (the other strong election year in terms of economic growth was 1984, when Ronald Reagan reaped the electoral benefit).

But 2016 was not like 1964 or 1972. The economy was slowly recovering, no longer in recession, but it was not booming as in those earlier years. According to the US Bureau of Economic Analysis, per-capita personal income grew at an annual rate of about 2.5 percent during the past year and 1.2 percent averaged over the past four years. These numbers are OK but not stunning and did not foretell an electoral landslide, in either direction. Going by economic indicators, we were looking at a close election, perhaps slightly favouring the incumbent party's candidate, depending on how strongly one weights the most recent economic performance.

One could jiggle this further by adjusting for presidential popularity (a slight plus for the Democrats), incumbent not running for re-election (a slight plus for the Republicans), and party balancing (a slight plus for the Democrats), but I buy the general point of political scientist Doug Hibbs and others, not that the Democrats were guaranteed to win but that the fundamentals predicted a close election with a slight edge to the Democrats and enough uncertainty to make the campaign interesting. So, yes the campaign mattered but given what we know about elections it's no surprise the election was close.

In the event, Clinton won the popular vote, Trump won the electoral vote, and there were some changes in vote coalitions (most notably, college-educated women moving to Clinton and non-college-educated men moving to Trump) and a drop in turnout of key Democratic groups, and that made all the difference. All from a baseline of a close election, as predicted based on economic conditions and the stability induced by political polarization.

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Picking up the pieces: the 2016 US Presidential Election and immigration

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Like many, I watched the US presidential election unfold with a sense of disbelief. In an election that most pundits had predicted would be a victory for Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton, state after state went to Republican candidate Donald Trump. By the next morning, a new political geography was apparent: large blue dots for major US cities and smaller red dots throughout the rest of the country. What will Trump's America hold for immigration, beyond promises of a wall between the US and Mexico and mass deportations?

An equally dreary picture. First, the US is likely to see the return of state and local anti-immigrant legislation. Beginning around 2006, many states and local communities, especially in the South, began passing laws designed to make life for undocumented immigrants unbearable. The 2012 presidential election and recognition of the 'Hispanic vote' largely stopped this legislative trend, but Trump's election will reinvigorate local efforts to make undocumented immigrants – and, by extension, their US-born children – unwelcome in local communities. The fact that Jeff Sessions, a Republican Senator from Alabama, will play a key role in Trump's administration only strengthens this possibility.

Second, the US is likely to (continue to) see much more vitriolic public discourse around immigration. Again, this will be a change from trends in recent years. After 2012, many Republicans who had been 'tough' on immigration softened their tones. State-level anti-immigrant laws were dismantled, and executive orders eased the fears of undocumented immigrants who were brought to the US as young children or who had US-born children. Trump's entry into the election in July 2015 bucked that trend with his declaration that Mexico sent rapists, drug-runners, and criminals to the US and that a 'beautiful' wall between Mexico and the US (and paid for by Mexico) was a necessary solution to the 'problem of immigration. His subsequent campaign only intensified xenophobic claims about immigrants, the crime they brought with them, and the need to deport 'bad hombres' and end birthright citizenship. For Trump, making America great again meant taking it back to the 1950s era of mass deportations and less ethnic and racial diversity. Immigration, for him, was a hurdle to being great.

Third, we are likely to see more misinformation about immigration. Trump's campaign not only sanctioned racist statements about immigrants but also legitimated specious claims about immigration itself. Trump, of course, is not the first politician to make up claims, but he took this practice to a new level. He repeatedly claimed that immigrants commit crimes at greater rates than 'Americans', an argument that has been repeatedly refuted by a large body of research.[1] Trump, however, ignored that empirical reality and highlighted the actions of a few immigrants to damn them all. Despite no grounding in reality, this linking of immigrants to crime played a central role in Trump's campaign.

Trump also repeatedly claimed that undocumented immigrants "pour" across the US-Mexico border. Again, there is no empirical basis to this claim. The flow of undocumented Mexican immigrants has been decreasing since 2007, and by 2013, more Americans were moving to Mexico than Mexicans moving to the US Trump's language about immigrants pouring into the US tapped long-standing xenophobic discourses about a "flood" of immigrants overwhelming the country. By ignoring empirical trends and tapping into such stereotypes, Trump created his own truths, which then took on a life of their own.

Perhaps most damningly for those of us interested in progressive approaches to immigration, Trump transformed what immigration means and is understood to cause, allowing it to proxy for a range of other forces – like neoliberal globalization – shaping people's lives, especially the lives of white, working-class households. Trump positioned immigrants as causing the losses that large swaths of the US have experienced and, perhaps most frighteningly, as fixing those feelings of marginalization by their absence – making America great again by removing immigrants from it.

Where do we go from here? A key part of picking up the pieces from this election is figuring out how to change public discourse around immigration. Despite what Trump says, immigration is not going anywhere, no matter what kind of walls you build. It is built into local, national, and global economies and into the American social fabric. The question before us is how to find productive ways to talk about and act on the complexity of immigration and its centrality to American life. I have built my career around studying the politics of immigration. At least in the short term, the tone of my research will be much darker.

[1] *For a summary, see Sampson, Robert J. 2008. "Rethinking Crime and Immigration." Contexts 7.1: 28-33.*

A bilingual campaign: clinton's latino political communication

Throughout the 2016 United States campaigns, candidates, politicians, journalists and laypersons discussed issues about national identity, class, gender, and race. Among these matters, there was an intense conversation about Latinos as a growing minority group that is gaining political, economic, social and cultural power in the United States. In this electoral cycle, 27.3 millions of Latinos were eligible to vote, and according to the exit polls, Latinos cast 11% of the total votes. At the end of the election, Hillary Clinton received 62% of the Latino vote and Donald Trump 29%.

The Latino issue was part of the national political agenda before the presidential campaigns started. Scholars, journalists, and commentators characterized the Hispanic/Latino voters as a 'sleeping giant,' and they tried to predict the power of this group to shape the United States electoral map. However, the issue became more relevant because Trump spent a significant part of his campaign attacking and criticizing Latinos. In June of 2015, when he announced his presidential candidacy, Trump referred to Latinos and Mexicans in particular as "criminals and rapists" and expressed that he had the intention of building a wall on the Southern border. In contrast, Clinton developed a campaign that advocated for defending minorities. She reacted to many of Trump's attacks against Latinos but also built an enormous political communication machine to outreach these communities across America.

The Clinton campaign created national and local teams for Latino outreach. These teams deployed a bilingual campaign in English and Spanish to inform Latinos about Clinton's policy proposals, campaign activities, media appearances, and reactions to political junctures. By and large, the Latino outreach team created a communicative structure to spread the political messages through interpersonal, group, mass, and digital communication. Some of these political messages were part of the general campaign, and others were crafted specifically for Latinos (i.e., immigration reform, education, and employment).

Four central mechanisms informed Clinton's Latino political communication machinery. First, this campaign created a large ground game structure through all the country. Clinton had dozens of offices that were in charge of two communication processes: phone-banking and canvassing. Clinton's staff recruited volunteers who made millions of phone calls and had bilingual face-to-face conversations with potential voters. This strategy had the goal of persuading citizens to register to vote, to explain the basic information about the elections (i.e., voting day and polling locations), and to convince undecided voters to support Clinton.

Second, during the campaigns Clinton had rallies in different towns and cities across the country. In these events, the candidate communicated her policy proposals, her opinions about the political campaign, and attacked the plans and ideas of the Republican candidate. Clinton rallied several times in states with a strong Latino presence such as Florida, Nevada, and Arizona. Moreover, Clinton used her running mate, Tim Kaine, to outreach Latinos during the rallies. Tim Kaine knows how to speak Spanish and he used this language to deliver public speeches to Latino audiences—for example, in Arizona, he gave the first Spanish language speech in an American election.

Third, the campaign had a strong presence on mass media—especially on television. Throughout the Primaries and the General Election, Clinton's campaign produced and broadcasted radio and TV ads that stressed the importance of the Latino voters, and that narrated the stories of Latino children, students, millennials, and soldiers in the United States. Also, Clinton's campaign relied on Telemundo and Univision, two Spanish-speaking national television networks. Clinton and Kaine were interviewed by journalists of these networks and appeared on entertainment shows such as Buenos Días América and El Gordo y la Flaca.

Fourth, the campaign used digital media for spreading political messages to the youngest segments of the Latino population. Clinton had English and Spanish versions of her web page and Twitter accounts in both languages. The campaign used emails and newsletters for fundraising and spreading information about local rallies and events. Additionally, the campaign used text messages to inform, organize, and protect the vote of Latinos. Finally, digital media platforms were useful communication channels to replicate and broadcast the messages and interactions produced in the other parts of the political communication machinery (e.g., TV and radio ads, interviews, training kits for phone bankers and canvassers, etc.).

The aforementioned paragraphs contain a description of how Hillary Clinton addressed the Latino population. However, this academic endeavor needs to go further. As *The Atlantic* political reporter, Molly Ball suggested, the 2016 Untied States campaigns were not an electoral cycle about policy, but about identity and culture. In this sense, the 2016 Unites States election analysis asks to go beyond a descriptive phase and dig into a cultural understanding of political campaigns.

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How the wall with Mexico symbolizes the Utopia of Trump's supporters

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One of the boldest proposals put forward in the 2016 US presidential electoral campaign was Trump's plan to erect a wall on the US-Mexico border to keep out illegal immigrants. Although at first sight nonsensical, Trump repeatedly claimed he indeed wants to build the wall, insisting the Mexican government would pay for the construction of this border protection device.

The proposal, and the way it has been received by the Trump supporters, poses a challenge for professional observers of electoral campaigns. The broadsheet media quickly pointed out the proposal was not feasible. Not only would it be cost prohibitive, the US federal government does not even own the land where the wall would be built. Furthermore no reasonable person actually imagines the Mexican government would be inclined to pay. During his visit to Mexico, then candidate Trump carefully avoided talking about the wall and its financing, allowing commentators to assume these problems effectively killed the entire idea. However, surprise, surprise: candidate Trump went on to repeat the proposal, and crowds at his rallies cheered. Commentators already flabbergasted by the proposal were even more surprised that their serious criticisms had no tangible impact, as they were simply ignored by a vast majority of the Trump supporters. In fact exit polls suggest concerns about immigration had been an important mobilizing factor for Trump voters, and 'the wall' had been very successful in symbolizing fears while offering a solution.

Research offers clues for why. Firstly, most US voters are not well informed about politics. So we cannot assume median Trump voters read or understood criticisms. Second, partisans tend to disregard information that runs counter to their own beliefs, so would be inclined to question the reliability of this information.

More importantly we turn to understanding populism, which rejects this kind of reality check. Populist proposals typically appeal to emotional sentiments, rather than standard institutional mechanisms. Populism offers the opportunity to escape the incremental muddling through so typical of institutional politics - by definition it feeds on radical proposals and questions of feasibility runs against the basic emotional appeal of populist rhetoric. 'The wall' symbolizes the longing for a closed society, as Popper would label it. Has there ever been a more powerful symbol for closure than a wall?

The wall is not meant as a realistic proposal, and may not be judged that way by all Trump supporters. The wall is a utopian metaphor for an ideal society. For those concerned about crime, drugs, unemployment, the rise of Spanish language rights, and increasing diversity, the wall offers a perfect metaphor. It keeps dangers out of the perfectly tranquil small town American life. The wall offers a return to a way of life that has disappeared, because of increasing globalization, economic flows and demographic change. The wall symbolizes the promise of happiness in a closed society under threat. One could hardly think of a better metaphor for a closed society than simply building a wall around that secluded piece of land, where one can continue to live free from globalization, diversity and other causes of fear. Within rural, rather homogeneous communities, Trump succeeded in mobilizing most voters.

Any ideal society can be labelled a utopia. A utopia is the reification of a concept that is considered to be ideal. Intellectuals generally like the 'I have a dream' rhetoric about white and black children going hand and hand together to school. But there are alternative dreams.

The wall signifies the exact opposite utopian project. If Trump had more rhetorical talent, he might defend his proposal with exactly the opposite words of that famous speech of more than half a century ago.

"I have a dream that one day, up in New York State, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of multiculturalism and minority rights – one day right there in New York, little white boys and girls will be left alone, with other white boys and white girls as only sisters and brothers. I have a dream that one day every valley will be closed, and that on every hill and mountain there will be a wall, and that we can just live the life we have lost".

Some will be appalled at reading this, but we should realize that for some the appeal of a homogeneous society is just as strong as the appeal of a society without prejudice is for others.

After the election: Trump's wall

Last week citizens of the United States elected as President someone who is openly racist, misogynist, and xenophobic. We elected someone who chose a vice presidential running mate who as governor of Indiana sought to enact homophobic and openly discriminatory state policies. Additionally, our incoming President has claimed he will retreat from a host of international agreements and relationships, from NAFTA and NATO to climate mitigatwion treaties. He does not believe in science, at least when it offers inconvenient truths.

Fear, disbelief, and horror are rippling through part of the American public (here I include citizens as well as legal and unauthorized residents), while another part of this public is jubilant and feeling entitled to express more openly prejudice and hate. The Southern Poverty Law Center received 400 incidents of hateful harassment between November 9th and November 14th—including 136 anti-immigrant, 89 anti-black, 43 anti-LGBTQ and 26 anti-woman incidents. As this wave of white nationalism and hate ripple across the country, many wonder what the incoming President will actually do on a range of fronts. Policy details do not fit into 140-character limits.

My commentary here focuses on one specific policy Donald Trump has repeated over and over: his promise to build a wall between Mexico and the United States, which he couples with massive deportation of undocumented residents. A Pew Research survey shows his supporters are united by, perhaps more than any other issue, anti-immigrant sentiment. While this extends to Muslim immigrants, a key group in the line of fire are undocumented Mexican and Latin American immigrants.

The intuitive appeal of a wall on the southern border stems in part from the idea that the 'cause' of this labor migration lies outside of the United States. Build it high enough and the flow will stop. The appeal of the wall also lies in racist language that frames all Latino immigrants as invading "criminals" who represent a dire threat to the nation.

The wall as a solution presumes the origins of cross-border labor flows lie outside the United States rather than within it, ignoring the fundamental dynamics of low-wage labor markets in the United States, which have recruited low-wage workers to cross the border. My research, like that of others, sheds light on the day-to-day incentives employers have for recruiting undocumented workers. The cumulative effect of these recruitment practices, which occur in nearly every geographic region of the country, is to invite large-scale migration across the US-Mexico border. From this perspective, the origins of the current situation, in which 6.4 percent of our workforce lacks documentation, lie north of the border as much as south of it.

The economic power of this process is resistant to border control and physical barriers installed over the last two decades – precursors to the fantasy of an impenetrable wall. It is telling that the steady growth of the undocumented workforce between the mid-1990s through the mid-2000s happened despite a nearly constant growth of spending on border patrol, new barriers and surveillance. Only in the wake of the 2008 economic crash, which dramatically slowed recruitment processes, did the unauthorized Mexican workforce in the United State start to decline.

While there is a clear economic logic to the presence of millions of undocumented workers in the United States, a logic that I believe we misunderstand at our peril, the current system does not provide justice nor a decent life for low-wage immigrant or non-immigrant workers. The demand for the undocumented is rooted squarely in their undocumented status. Living in fear of deportation on a daily basis inspire many to tie themselves closely to their employer—becoming compliant workaholics who become the 'ideal worker' from the employer's perspective.

It seems likely that the dream one week ago of comprehensive immigration reform has been lost to the nightmare of a deportation nation surrounded by a very expensive even if easily breached wall. Comprehensive immigration reform held out the potential for undocumented workers to legalize, a place from which they could demand better wages and working conditions. Their improved situation would actually have helped level the playing field for non-immigrant workers, perhaps easing some of the economic anxieties that contributed to the rise of Trump.

This week the future looks bleak—for economic growth, for social peace and justice.

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Trump's global war on terror

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Many things seem obvious in retrospect, including the US presidential election of Donald Trump, who campaigned on the same populist energy driving political movements in the UK. and elsewhere. One thing that becomes more clear in light of post-election surveys is the role of terrorism as an issue, and how it can be exploited to generate and direct fear among citizens. Trump was able to effectively incorporate this fear into his "Make America Great" masterframe. In this respect, he built on a rhetorical foundation established 15 years earlier.

After September 11, 2001, the administration of George Bush announced its Global War on Terrorism, a framing that has shown remarkable resilience since then in spite of its shortcomings as a way to organize foreign policy responses (How does one fight against a tactic?). Since that time the frame has become deeply embedded in political discourse. An organization called the 'Global War on Terror Memorial Foundation' has even recently advocated building a suitable monument in Washington, D.C. (Scruggs, 2016).

Although President Obama avoided the frame himself, Trump capitalized on it (even recruiting 'Mayor of 9/11' Rudy Giuliani as one of his closest advisers). Surveys showed that among voters listing 'terrorism' as an important issue, Trump was the significantly preferred candidate. Why was he deemed more effective than Hillary Clinton, in spite of much of the foreign policy establishment supporting her?

Trump more effectively appealed to fear, linking fear of terrorism to fear of the Other, specifically Muslims. His Republican convention acceptance address, already noted by other observers, underscored the dark tone of his appeal. In this respect, his anti-terrorism strategy ("We will destroy ISIS.") lined up with his nationalist protectionism and related xenophobia. A proposed ban on Muslims entering the US was a natural extension of those policies and served to further diagnose the problem in the minds of the voters.

My interviews several years ago with American journalists showed they had a hard time defining the War on Terror frame when Bush was invoking it to justify Afghanistan and later Iraq. They said, "We all know what it means." Moving into that ambiguous space Trump was able to equate it with 'Radical Islam', providing reason enough for his supporters to be wary of Muslims. In linking terrorism with a major world religion Obama had declared that phrase to be an unhelpful analysis, and one that even helped confirm the extremists' ideology. He was attacked accordingly by Trump and Giuliani, who were able to promote a more simple diagnosis—one that regrettably risked playing into the hands of extremist groups.

Of course, a simplistic solution to a complex problem is always seductive. In the face of unvarnished, shoot-from-the-hip Republican rhetoric, the multi-factor and contextualized explanation for extremism risks sounding not 'authentic', a deadly sin in current political communication, failing to fit the rapid-fire social media and 24/7 news environment. Thus, the institutional press had a difficult time engaging with a more complex but realistic approach to the problem of terrorism.

I was concerned that perhaps a late-campaign terrorist attack—either in the US or abroad--would benefit Trump's messaging and distort the election, but, as it turned out, the fear had been there all along. For Americans, 9/11 breached their expectations that the government would keep them safe, and that breach has not been fully resolved. Ultimately, however, security is not a sustainable national value, so eventually — as with promises to bring back the coal mines, steel mills, and a world gone by — voters will soon see that Trump will not be able to deliver.

US journalism has been faulted for decades for its preoccupation with campaign tactics and lack of policy coverage, but in this election more thoughtful analysis was desperately needed to counteract Trump's xenophobic extension of Bush's War on Terror. We will need it even more during the next four years.

Will Trump continue Obama's legacy of drone strikes?

A contentious point in President Obama's legacy, as Kindervater highlights, is the dramatically increased drone activity under his leadership. Interest in drones increased post 9/11 because of the threat and hysteria surrounding terrorism. The topic of drones has been rarely discussed in the 2016 presidential election campaign. Trump has not referred to drones specifically, but has commented on ISIS who has often been the targets of drone strikes: "I would bomb the Hell out of them." More concerning is when Trump suggested killing the families of ISIS terrorists. Drones have already killed anywhere from 46 to 116 civilians according to the Obama administration. However, the Bureau of Investigative Journalism refute these numbers and state that they are only a fraction of the 380 to 801 civilian casualties as the result of drones. One important aspect of drones has been the safety of civilian lives. As Kindervater notes, both Obama and Hillary Clinton have promoted their effectiveness at not only killing terrorist leaders, but also providing protection to civilians through their targeted use.

While the usage of drones has increased under the Obama administration, the concept of drones has been under consideration even as far back as the World War II. Other countries in the past have experimented with this concept such as the UK creating the Larynx and Ram during World War II. There was already strong support for building drones during the 2012 US Presidential campaign. Barack Obama, Mitt Romney and the majority of the public supported targeted drone strikes at the time.

The public perceptions and history can give insight into the future of drone strikes. The public has yet to turn against drones in a significant way. A poll by the Pew research centre and published in the Huffington Post last year indicated that the majority of Americans still supported drone strikes.

From Trump's aggressive rhetoric towards ISIS, it can be expected that he will fully utilise drone strikes. While targeted drone strikes are meant to reduce civilian casualties, Trump doesn't appear to have much concern for the lives of civilians. In his own words "The other thing with the terrorists is you have to take out their families." It is impossible to say at this stage whether Trump will increase or even decrease the use of drones, although they have proven to be an effective method according to the Obama administration. What is clear is that if Trump does use them, he is likely to adopt a more aggressive approach, free of fears for civilian safety. This is suggested by his dismissive attitude towards the current US generals. Mark Thompson quotes him as suggesting that he would replace them with generals more in line with his way of thinking.

Trump can act on his own on some levels when it comes to war without direct interference from Congress. As Freeman notes, "The executive has long asserted that the President has independent authority to conduct at least some military operations in the absence of an authorizing act of Congress." More concerning is a 'history of acquiescence' within the Congress when it comes to past President's more questionable acts of war. This is not to say that Congress will sit quietly while Trump carries out his plans, but it is an area of concern. Trump isn't under any pressure to restrict drone strikes in the current climate, but this may change if he were to carry out what would amount to war crimes using them. It is unclear what Trump will do militarily over the next four years, but if he does continue the Obama policy of drone strikes, it seems unlikely he will use targeting functionality to its fullest to reduce civilian casualties and this may lead to growing public opposition to their use.

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Loose cannons: or the silent debate on drones

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In a news story indicative of the anxieties fueling a bizarre, vitriolic, and seemingly interminable campaign season, Fortune magazine reported that prior to the third and final debate between Republican presidential candidate, Donald Trump, and his Democratic rival, Hillary Clinton, the Las Vegas Police Department hired a private security firm to set up a drone detection system in the skies above the debate venue. While fear of rogue drone operators wreaking havoc at this high-profile event compelled local law enforcement to take dramatic security measures, questions surrounding the legal, strategic, and ethical implications of the US drone program were conspicuously absent from the evening's debate.

Four years earlier, when asked about his views on the targeted killing program during their final debate, GOP hopeful Mitt Romney unequivocally endorsed President Obama's drone strategy. Republican and Democratic consensus effectively made drones a non-issue in the 2012 presidential race: a sharp contrast to international condemnation of America's drone wars. Since that time, journalists rarely questioned presidential candidates about drones: Obama's 'weapon of choice' in the decades-long war on terror. What was once an open, albeit controversial secret has become a matter of routine for both the political establishment and the US press corps. Obama's lasting foreign policy legacy is neither the historic multilateral nuclear deal with Iran, nor the diplomatic overtures to Cuba, but rather the normalization of drone warfare.

As a result, during the 2016 campaign political debate focused instead on the wisdom of entrusting Donald Trump – the personification of a loose cannon – with America's nuclear arsenal. Trump's bellicose rhetoric and his penchant for unnerving statements about nuclear weapons demanded such coverage. Not since Richard Nixon's 'madman strategy' has a presidential candidate evoked fears of an unstable and irrational leader with his (or her) finger on the button. As Hillary Clinton observed, it would be foolish to underestimate Donald Trump's 'hair-trigger' temperament in this regard. Nevertheless, throughout the campaign, the focus on Trump's foreign policy bluster overshadowed Clinton's well-documented appetite for regime change and anti-Russian hysteria. Small wonder, then, that in the final days of the 2016 election Trump doubled down on the nuclear nightmare scenario, telling reporters that Clinton's sabre rattling against Russia could lead to World War III.

By design, fear-based campaigns of this sort generate more heat than light. Still, questions over the next president's willingness to use nuclear weapons remain a salient issue. So too does the prospect of President-elect Trump commanding the drone program – what is essentially a hi-tech hit squad. And yet, despite President Obama's Executive Order calling for greater transparency and improved safeguards against civilian causalities in America's drone wars, neither the candidates nor the press corps saw fit to address targeted killing in any substantive fashion. Instead, rumor, innuendo and speculation constituted an otherwise silent debate over the future of the US drone program.

Throughout the campaign Trump was uncharacteristically reticent regarding weaponized drones. Reading between the lines of some of his most egregious statements about fighting the Islamic State, Trump's declaration that he would "bomb the hell out of them" suggests a prominent role for drone aircraft. More ominously, Trump's assertions that he would target terrorists *and their families*, presumably using drones, was met with consternation across the political spectrum. All told, however, Trump rarely shared his thoughts on the drone program. Journalists obliged and likewise avoided the subject.

Similarly, Clinton scarcely mentioned the drone program. Unlike Trump however, Clinton's service as Secretary of State suggests implicit approval of the expansion of the targeted killing program under President Obama. And given her hawkish views on foreign policy, Clinton likely foresees an even greater role for drones in US military and paramilitary operations. Curiously, drones did figure in one of the more sensational accusations leveled at Mrs. Clinton throughout the entire, sordid campaign. In late October, True Pundit, a conservative website, reported that when pressed to do something about WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange in the wake of the anti-secrecy group's release of a cache of State Department communiqués (what came to be known as Cablegate), Secretary Clinton asked, "Can't we just drone this guy?" The unsubstantiated story led to a series of non-denial denials from the Clinton camp, effectively ending any further discussion of the targeted killing program.

In March 2016, columnist Trevor Timm argued the US press corps was letting presidential candidates off the hook on five vital foreign policy questions. Citing the worldwide proliferation of drones, Timm suggested robotic warfare constitutes a critical challenge to international security, and as such demands robust debate. That debate never materialized. Nonetheless, come January 20, 2017, Donald Trump, one of the most feared and reviled candidates in the history of American politics, will take the reins of the US drone program.

Guns return to american elections

At the start of the 2016 election campaign, Democrat Hillary Clinton did something that no major presidential candidate had done since 2000: she brought the issue of gun violence into the contest. Touting her support for stronger gun laws, she used it to criticize her chief opponent, Vermont Democratic Socialist Senator Bernie Sanders. This issue proved useful for Clinton partly because it was one where she could criticize her ultra-liberal opponent from the left, given Sanders' record of support against stronger gun laws – an anomaly explained by the fact that Sanders' home state is strongly pro-gun.

In the fall race, Clinton hammered her Republican opponent Donald Trump on the issue, lending her support for universal gun purchase background checks, reimposition of the assault weapons ban, and better mental health screening to filter out those who should not have access to guns – all measures supported by most Americans. Trump has returned fire, extolling his embrace of gun rights – a reversal of opinion for him, as Trump had previously supported gun regulations. During the campaign, Trump, endorsed by the National Rifle Association, opposed the assault weapons ban and supported civilian gun carrying as a way of improving personal self-defence and thwarting crime.

But this leaves a larger question: why have presidential candidates been silent on guns for the last 16 years, and what changed?

Flash back to the 2000 elections. Democratic presidential candidate Al Gore actively touted support for new gun measures, but in losing the race, Democrats concluded (wrongly, later research revealed) that the issue hurt them. They mostly proceeded to avoid the issue and to appeal more aggressively to moderates and even conservatives—so-called 'Blue Dog' Democrats—which all but eliminated from the national debate any systematic advocacy for tougher gun laws. In turn, the gun-friendly presidency of George W. Bush quietly pressed for and won most of the NRA's pro-gun wish list.

For the next three presidential elections, little was heard on guns. Even liberal president Barack Obama avoided the subject despite a past record of support for tougher gun laws. In fact, one gun safety organization gave him a failing grade in his first term for his failure to advance the issue, and for signing in to law two minor measures making gun carrying easier in national parks and on trains.

But then three key events changed everything.

First, the December 2012 senseless mass shooting of 26 school children and staff at Sandy Hook elementary school in Connecticut shocked the nation in a way not felt since the 1990s. Second, that event motivated Pres. Obama, fresh off his re-election, to do an about face. He appointed a commission to develop legislative and other policy recommendations, and took them to Congress in the Spring of 2013. While Congress ultimately failed to act, Obama wouldn't let the issue go. Every time a new mass shooting occurred, Obama used his bully pulpit to abhor the violence, deplore the lack of even elementary new gun measures like universal background checks for all gun purchases, and chastise Congress for its failure to act. These repetitive rhetorical moments didn't change policy, but did help push the issue back into the national debate.

Third, the Sandy Hook shooting spurred the formation and growth of new gun safety groups bent on breaking the NRA's stranglehold on gun policy. Former New York City Mayor Michel Bloomberg's group, Mayors Against Illegal Guns, was reorganized when it combined with a recently formed grassroots gun safety group to form Everytown for Gun Safety. Bloomberg and allies doubled down on their efforts, pouring more money and resources into selected state races and referenda, among other actions. Another new Sandy Hook-inspired group, Americans for Responsible Solutions, was formed by former Arizona Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, who survived being shot in the head by a deranged man in 2011, and her husband, former astronaut Mark Kelly. They, too, garnered significant national attention and considerable resources to press for improved gun safety. (Both are also gun owners.)

These new groups did something never before seen: they outspent the NRA. The watershed moment came when they engineered the passage of a referendum in Washington State in 2014 to provide for universal background checks for all gun purchases, and defeated a competing measure that would have blocked such checks. In the 2016 election cycle, four states voted on new gun measures, and the issue played a key role in state elections including Missouri, New Hampshire, and Pennsylvania.

The upsurge in gun politics suggests that, if these new gun safety groups stay in the gun policy fight, the issue won't go away. There may even come a day when the country's clear preference for stronger gun laws may actually come to be reflected in policy.

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President Trump and climate change

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As scientists become more gloomy about keeping global warming below the allegedly 'safe' limit of 2 °C, the issue is disappearing from the US presidential debates. There was a brief mention in the second Trump/Clinton debate, with climate change treated as an 'afterthought'.

Trump has previously (in 2012) suggested climate change "was created by and for the Chinese". His original 'first 100' days plan for climate and energy got pulled from his website, archived at 'wayback machine'. It makes for depressing reading, with promises to "cancel the Paris Climate Agreement and stop all payments of U.S. tax dollars to U.N. global warming programs" accompanied by a bonfire of domestic regulations. How much of that will happen remains to be seen.

Early days

Awareness of the threat of climate change goes back decades, well before its arrival on public policy agendas in 1988. While John F. Kennedy was aware of environmental problems generally (he'd read Rachel Carson's Silent Spring), it was his successor Lyndon Johnson who made the first presidential statement about climate change, written for him by pioneering climate scientist Roger Revelle. Following a warning on the topic from Democratic senator Daniel Moynihan in September 1969, Nixon created the US Environmental Protection Authority in an age when conservatism meant conserving things, but climate change was still very niche. Ronald Reagan's hostility to all matters environmental is infamous, with attempts to abolish both the Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency, but with the credibility of atmospheric scientists high thanks to their discovery of the ozone hole, moves towards a climate agreement could not be completely resisted.

1988 and beyond

A combination of growing scientific alarm about the growth of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and a long hot summer in 1988 made climate change an election issue. On the campaign trail, then-Vice President George H. W. Bush announced in his presidential campaign:

"Those who think we're powerless to do anything about the "greenhouse effect" are forgetting about the "White House effect"… I will convene a global conference on the environment at the White House… We will talk about global warming… And we will act"

He didn't act, of course, successfully insisting targets and timetables for emissions reductions be removed from the proposed climate treaty to be agreed at the Rio Earth Summit, before he would agree to attend.

It was 2000 before presidential candidates debated the issue. George W. Bush (2000-09) said:

"I think it's an issue that we need to take very seriously. But I don't think we know the solution to global warming yet. And I don't think we've got all the facts before we make decisions".

The peak year for climate concern was 2008, with climate rating a mention in all three presidential debates". Obama framed climate change as an energy independence issue, arguing that: "we've got to walk the walk and not just talk the talk when it comes to energy independence". Despite a petition with 160,000 signatures, the debate moderators for the 2012 debate did not put the issue on the agenda, with the Republican nominee, Mitt Romney, accused of recanting early climate change positions.

Why the silence?

There are two reasons. One is simply down to the politicisation around the issue. As shown above, as recently as 2008 Republicans admitted climate change was happening. In 2012 only one contender, Jon Huntsman, was willing to do so, he soon dropped out, with his views dramatically unpopular among Republican voters. What happened? In two words: Tea Party. The emergence of the hyper-conservative Tea Party Republican faction was the culmination of a longer-term trend of "anti-reflexivity".

The second reason is more gloomy, because it is more intractable. Those who have denied climate change for so very long will find it very costly – both politically and psychologically – to reverse their position and admit that they have been wrong. Climate change denial has become a cultural position.

What next?

In the day since Trump won, there has been a flurry of commentary. Joe Romm asks' Will Trump go down in history as the man who pulled the plug on a liveable climate?'

"The shocking election of Donald Trump on Tuesday night is a turning point in the history of climate action, and therefore the history of homo sapiens. That's because whatever warming, sea level rise, ocean acidification, and Dust-Bowlification we commit to is irreversible on a timescale of a thousand years."

For David Roberts "Trump's election marks the end of any serious hope of limiting climate change to 2 degrees", with "widespread suffering and misery from climate change now effectively inevitable."

Meanwhile, the carbon dioxide accumulates, and the impacts pile up.

Dark days ahead for our climate

As the second largest emitter of carbon dioxide and historically the largest contributor to observed climate change, the United States has a unique responsibility to lead the effort to avoid increased damage caused by rising global temperatures. The political climate in the US, however, has proven hostile to significant movement towards a comprehensive solution. In the previous Congress, known climate skeptics and deniers (all of whom are Republican) made up 38% of the House of Representatives and 33% of the Senate. Partisan polarization among voters is also extreme: in 2016, 85% of Democrats agreed that the rise in Earth's temperature in the last century was mainly due to human activities, while only 38% of Republicans shared this view.

Confronted with these political barriers, the Obama Administration decided from early on to treat climate change as a legacy issue. Despite initial setbacks such as the blocking of cap-and-trade legislation in 2010 (including opposition from some maximalist Democrats), President Obama redoubled efforts to alter the country's course on both domestic and international mitigation policy. American leadership, for instance, was crucial for the successful signing of the Paris Agreement last December and its entering into force earlier this year. On the domestic front, Obama has leveraged his executive powers to circumvent Congress in order to take action. Among other initiatives, the President put in place the Clean Power Plan (CPP) which is understood as the cornerstone of current Federal emissions reduction policy. The plan seeks to limit greenhouse gas emissions from coal and natural gas power plants, with an overall target of 32% emissions reductions in the American electricity sector by 2030.

The Presidential and Congressional elections this year were decisive for the future of our global climate. Although the Paris Agreement was an historic moment for international cooperation on climate change, climate scientists have strongly questioned the notion that current national emissions reduction pledges will see average global temperature rise, relative to pre-industrial levels, below the dreaded 2C threshold by 2100. At the moment, what is in place is not enough to protect our climate; much more effort is needed to ensure a stable future. American leadership is seen as a necessary condition for increased ambition by other major emitters, notably China and India. Similarly, domestic mitigation efforts have also proven to be on shaky ground. The CPP, for instance, is currently being challenged in Federal court by 28 states and a slew of energy interests on the grounds that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has overstepped its legal authority. While many analysts believe that the court will uphold the CPP, it may not matter at this point.

A Republican-led Congress along with an outspoken climate denier President is the nightmare scenario for our climate. It is beyond question that we will experience severe backsliding on climate change policy both internationally and domestically once this unified Republican government comes to power.

President-elect Trump has already sent credible signals on how he intends to honor his promises to radically upend existing environmental policies. The first shock was the announcement that Myron Ebell, a veteran climate denier, will lead the EPA transition team and may even be tapped as its Administrator. It is also clear that Trump plans to rescind the CPP and all other environmental executive orders that are against the interests of the fossil fuel industry. Further, the new administration is more than likely to re-open oil, gas and coal production efforts - all in the name of increased income and energy independence.

At the international level, the threat seems to be even more severe. Discussions emerging from the Trump camp are not focused on *whether* the United States should withdraw from the Paris Agreement, but how *quickly* this can be done. Observers were horrified to learn that one of the tactics that might be used is to withdraw from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) which is the foundation agreement on global climate cooperation and also the parent treaty to the Paris Agreement. Such a move would be beyond devastating for global cooperation on climate and would also severely diminish American reputation and standing in the world.

Unfortunately, there is not much room for optimism moving forward. Out of all the campaign pledges Donald Trump put forth, attacking the environment ranks as one of the least politically costly promises that he can deliver. Internationally, withdrawal from existing climate agreements or even simple non-compliance bear no real consequence to his political survival. Also, we should not forget the overwhelming support that he received from fossil fuel producing districts. And while major conservative funders such as the Koch family were surprisingly hostile to Trump in this election, a dismemberment of Obama's climate change policies might help open the money taps as reelection time approaches.

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Diversity and Division

Hillary Clinton's evolving gender appeals

In 2008, Hillary Clinton made her first bid for the US presidency and did not overly emphasize her gender. Senior adviser Ann Lewis called this decision the "biggest missed opportunity" of the primaries and said Clinton "ceded the mantle of barrier-breaker entirely to Barack Obama". Prior to and during the 2016 Democratic primaries, Clinton sought to reclaim that mantle. In December 2015, Clinton released the '44 boys is too many!' ad, featuring little girls reading aspirational letters written to Clinton. In a September 2015 interview and again in a primary debate in February 2016, Clinton pushed back on the idea that she was an establishment candidate by saying, "I cannot imagine anyone being more of an outsider than the first woman president". In April 2016, Donald Trump said, "If Hillary Clinton were a man, I don't think she'd get 5% of the vote. The only thing she's got going is the woman's card"; in response, Clinton sold physical "women cards" and raised $2.4 million in 3 days. Clinton capitalized on her gender.

Moving into the general election, there was a shift in Clinton's gendered appeals. Clinton focused less on what was new about her, and focused more on what had been there all along: a persistent focus on children, women, and families—issues women voters typically place a higher value on than men. Her history of work on the Children's Defense Fund and Children's Health Insurance Program, a celebration of her proclamation in China of "human rights are women's rights and women's rights are human rights," and her other endeavors were echoed in advertisements, rallies, and numerous DNC speeches, including in running mate Tim Kaine's speech: "When you want to know something about the character of somebody in public life, look to see if they have a passion that began long before they were in office, and that they have consistently held it throughout their career… Hillary has a passion for kids and families." During the third presidential debate, Clinton also went arguably further than any presidential candidate has in defending women's reproductive rights. All of this reframed the gendered focus away from Clinton's personal gender and toward direct appeals to women.

When it came to attacking her opponent's record on his treatment of women, Clinton did not shy away. During the third debate she attacked Trump's character and sent a clear appeal to women, "Donald thinks belittling women makes him bigger. He goes after their dignity, their self-worth, and I don't think there is a woman anywhere that doesn't know what that feels like."

A key culprit in undermining Trump's pull with women was Trump himself, and Clinton capitalized on Trump's words. Her 'Mirrors' ad and the super PAC ad 'Quotes' featured Trump's past derogatory comments on women, paired with shots of women of various ages and races. The 'Quotes' ad was particularly effective with women. After watching the ad, Trump's unfavorable ratings among women went up by 19 points relative to those who did not see the ad; for men, the shift was 1 point. During the third debate Trump said, "Nobody has more respect for women than I do," and minutes later called Clinton "such a nasty woman." Clinton supporters reappropriated the label by wearing "Nasty Woman" T-shirts, flooding social media, and Clinton surrogate Sen. Elizabeth Warren used it as a rallying cry during her speeches.

Perhaps Trump's most damaging moment with women came with the Access Hollywood recording, in which he described kissing and grabbing women without their consent because, "when you're a star…You can do anything." During a rally, Michelle Obama delivered the most direct response from the Clinton team to the "Trump Tapes." Having Obama deliver this attack, instead of Clinton, was necessary to some extent. Bill Clinton was not running for president, but Hillary is nonetheless his wife and his legacy in this area carries baggage. By having a strong surrogate who has no baggage in this domain make the attack, Clinton's campaign could more safely land an effective blow. In response, Glenn Beck said Obama's speech was "the most effective political speech since Ronald Reagan".

Clinton appealed to women, but only some embraced her appeals. According to CNN exit polls, Clinton had a sizeable 12-point gender gap, and she had an advantage over Trump with women of color, married and unmarried women, and Democratic and Independent women. However, she did not win over white women and there was no surge in women voters. Despite this, Clinton stayed the course and focused on women in her concession speech, stating: "to all the women… who put their faith in this campaign and in me: I want you to know that nothing has made me prouder than to be your champion."

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‘Madam President’ and the need for a historical contextualization of the 2016 race

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Empirical research regarding the role of gender in positions of leadership (either corporate or political) has shown consistently over time the glass ceiling that many women face, and Hillary Clinton’s 2016 Race has stirred the controversy regarding the gender dynamics of high office even further.

However, despite the growing success of women at the highest level of political power in recent times, gender – and in Hillary’s case, age, too – continues to impact heavily upon women’s opportunities to run for office (and win), and it would seem that the US is lagging behind other nations of the developed and the not-so-developed world on this. In fact, long before her, there have been other American women who paved the way for Hillary 2016. To name but a few, Victoria Woodhull was a suffragette who ran for the American presidency in 1872, Geraldine Ferraro ran for vice president with the Democrats in 1984, Pat Schroeder had a brief time as a Democratic nominee in 1988 before her subsequent ‘emotional’ withdrawal from the race, and Sarah Palin was nominated for the Republican V.P in 2008. In short, the US political history is littered with women who started off to run for national leadership but withdrew along the way. Having served as secretary of state, it’s true that Hillary is not being questioned on her toughness – surely not as Ferraro was challenged about her capacity to defend the United States from the Soviets and ‘push the nuclear button’ on account of her gender. If nothing else, Hillary offers herself as the more measured, but no less tough, candidate and invokes Trump’s trigger-happy attitude as a warning against his candidacy. In one advertisement she actually employed Trump’s unsettling image near the nuclear red button to press this point. What she *is* being criticized, and sometimes ridiculed, about is her looks, body shape, attire, being ‘menopausal’ and fragile – in essence all those things that tap into stereotypical gender characteristics the presidential candidate Hillary does not have in abundance: youth, health, stamina, sexiness. For her critics, Hilary is a ‘flawed’ candidate for national political leadership not just because the US presidency is perceived as a ‘masculine’ task, to be carried out by a male leader; but also because she is seen to betray ‘traditional’ female characteristics, while having acquired more ‘masculine’ ones along the way (decisiveness, toughness) – hence we understand why ‘Bitch’ has stuck in the popular imagination. In fact, the way we’ve moved on from the more ‘cool’ context of HBIC (Head Bitch in Charge) as depicted in the ‘Texts from Hillary’ tumblr in 2012, where we saw a busy Hillary texting from an airplane hangar, posing as a real-life Anna Wintour, running the world behind her dark glasses, to ‘Life’s a Bitch—don’t vote for one’ tees, indicates the profound gender asymmetries surrounding female presidency in America.

The question remains though: why is this happening? Part of the answer may lay in the Protestant culture of the US, which is an outlier especially when compared to Protestant Europe. Jennifer Merolla and colleagues suggest that although the Reformation brought increased female participation in the sacred across Protestant countries in Europe, afforded through Bible reading and interpretation, and thus prepared the ground for more tolerant attitudes towards female leadership in all realms, such practices did not extend to the US where Protestantism took a socially conservative turn. This kind of socially conservative Protestantism, which sees female submission to male leadership as appropriate within the political realm, the church *and* family, is seen to have had a dampening effect on women’s political engagement in America and explains low female representation, especially in the highest level of political office. Accounts of a woman president of the United States surfaced in the early 20th century, along with the rise of the suffragette movement and technological futurism. However, the notion of a woman president was seen to run counter to technological progress and several headlines warned against the ‘danger of a woman becoming president of the United States’ . At a more nuanced level, such thinking challenged deeply entrenched ideas about women’s place in American society at a time when the dominant perception of white, middle class ‘appropriate’ femininity contextualized women in the private sphere of the domesticity. Drawing from Joanne Hollows’ work on ‘Domestic Cultures’, I argue that the gendered controversy surrounding Hillary’s 2016 nomination, and whether or not she is fit to lead, is the culmination of a century-long social construction of *white, urban, middle-class American womanhood* in modernity, which assumed that women’s ‘natural’ place in the world was exhausted at home, while working class, black and immigrant femininities reserved a more ‘public’ perception of womanhood. The election outcome of 8 November goes to show the latent sexism American society is entrenched with, as well as Hillary’s inability to engage convincingly with public sentiments of anger about a rigged economy and government.

The 'nasty' politics of risk, gender and the emotional body in the US Presidential election

So, the worst has happened and Hillary Clinton was defeated by Donald Trump. From a feminist perspective, Trump's much documented misogyny and its apparent acceptance by some commentators as 'banter', represents a real risk to women's rights and to the self-esteem of girls growing up in the US. In Trump-land, retro-sexism becomes normalised, as women and their bodies are defined as risky objects of either desire or disgust. Thus, unpacking the psychosocial dynamics of the relationship between risk, gender and the body takes on a political urgency in a context where fantasies of femininity become aligned with notions of risk within the cultural and political imagination, as we saw in the campaign through representations of Clinton's body. So, whilst Trump represents a risk to women and to US civil rights more broadly, it is powerful women such as Clinton (who ironically, are said to be from the political establishment) who are nonetheless often presented as the risk, and who therefore cannot be trusted.

The wider socio-political context of 'risk society' has been discussed at length by Ulrich Beck and Giddens, who argue globalisation, economic crises and social fragmentation are linked to a heightened fear of risk and a dread of impending catastrophe. One can apply these ideas to the psychosocial and political dynamics of the US Presidential Election campaign and its media coverage, where widespread anxiety about risk was dealt with through the defensive mechanisms of splitting candidates into 'good and bad' and by projecting fears and anxieties onto them. The election has thrown into sharp relief the different ways that men and women are represented in the public sphere through the embodied attributes and emotions ascribed to each candidate. In Clinton's case, it was as if the fragmented political body (the electorate) dealt with their fears by projecting them onto the image of a corrupt and abject political body that she, as a woman, seemed to represent, and her body thus became the focus for their anxiety and sense of risk.

These psychosocial processes are linked to gendered divisions of emotion, and perceptions of the body that are prevalent in contemporary politics and society more widely. Against a backdrop of personality-driven mediated politics, the emotional personality has now taken centre-stage in political campaigns (Richards, 2007; Yates, 2015). This development is shaped by perceptions of gender, and men and women have a different relationship to the public in this respect, reflecting the double standards that exist around emotion and gender more widely. As is well known, women on the political stage are often encouraged to look as assertive as men, and yet must also be cautious about appearing too domineering. Although Trump's antics left many feeling that he is overly narcissistic and emotionally unstable, for swathes of the American electorate and in certain sections of the media, it was Hillary who was nonetheless represented as the riskier candidate. For decades, Clinton has been described as cold, unfeeling and somehow unnatural for failing to comply with feminine stereotypes. And yet we know if she 'softened' her image, she ran the risk of appearing too weak. Throughout the campaign, Clinton maintained a cool persona, but what was emphasised was her health and the potential frailty of her aging female body as being somehow inherently risky, thereby shoring up older discourses of femininity, emotion and embodiment.

Although many aspects of the news reporting – here and in the US – could serve to illustrate the implicit and explicit sexism within news and societal discourses, the repeated reporting on the two candidates' relative health uniquely illustrates the gendered double standard. The impact of the rigours of campaigning was heightened when Clinton contracted pneumonia in September and reportedly 'fainted', according to US and UK front pages, coupled with the coverage of health conspiracy theories related to Clinton and speculation after the release of her medical records. The double standard around gender, health and risk in relation to political competency and performance is evident if we look at the reporting around the candidates' health records. In contrast to press reports of Clinton's vulnerability, the self-professed 'high testosterone' levels of Trump reported in the news appears to celebrate his potency as a man despite the well-publicised sexual assault complaints from women. Despite the unease from within his own party and amongst some voters, the critical focus around trust and risk returned to Clinton, whose status as a woman appeared - at least in fantasy - to encapsulate anxieties about the dangers of femininity and women as political leaders.

As the political rhetoric and its new reporting would have it, Hillary Clinton's emotions and gendered body – and by extension those of all women – serve to heighten perceptions of her as an inevitable risk, therefore making her apparently untrustworthy as a leader. The fear and anxiety about the possibility of a 'nasty woman' president was so great that Clinton lost the election. As a result, we all lose because women and their leadership potential continue to be undermined within everyday settings such as media, politics and society.

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Why Trump's male chauvinism appeals to some voters more than others

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Even after mounting evidence of Donald Trump's exploitative and demeaning treatment of women, his standing in the polls still hovers above 40%. On the face of it that's more than a little shocking – but less surprising is the gender split among his supporters.

A recent summary of gender differences in the polls compiled by FiveThirtyEight found that women favour Trump's female opponent, Hillary Clinton, by 15 percentage points overall; men, on the other hand, favour Trump by five. It's true that many Republican women are standing by their man, but that's not enough for Trump to win women's vote overall.

No surprise at all to gender researchers, though, is that the first time a woman threatens to break through what Clinton called the "highest, hardest glass ceiling" of the US presidency, her nominated opponent is the embodiment of the "male chauvinist pig" – a man, usually in a position of power, who publicly expresses the opinion that women are by nature inferior to men and best relegated to the kitchen and the bedroom.

The term male chauvinism first emerged after World War II as more women entered paid employment. This threatened the self-esteem many men derive from their dominance over women in the family, the economy, and society at large.

The use of the term chauvinist pig became more widespread as women in the US demanded not just employment, but the employment equality supported by affirmative action and Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The epithet was in vogue during the late 1960s and early 1970s, at the height of second wave feminism.

Since then, many American men have adapted to women's economic gains. They are much more likely to be married to employed women than to women who aren't in the labour force. Men spend twice as much time doing unpaid housework and childcare as they did in the 1960s, and generally report more egalitarian attitudes to survey researchers.

Yet these gender equality gains are modest and fragile. Men's masculine identity is still linked to their economic role, and a man's chauvinist pig can resurface if this is threatened. But not all men are equally vulnerable to this threat.

All workers shared in the prosperity of the post-war era – but things began to change in the late 1970s, when wage inequality among men rose sharply in ways that affect their economic advantage over women.

Wage returns on a university degree steadily increased for both women and men, but the gender gap remains largest at the top of the wage distribution. In other words, the wage gains of high-skilled women are not likely to threaten the masculinity of high-skilled men. In contrast, the gender wage gap has almost disappeared among the least-skilled men and women.

Low-skilled men's wages stagnated as the US de-industrialised and the real value of the minimum wage declined. Collectively-bargained, high-wage manufacturing jobs evaporated; they were replaced by precarious, low-wage service sector positions. The upshot is that a couple or family could not survive for long on a low-skilled husband's income alone.

The men most affected by this transformation are now lining up for Trump like no other segment of the electorate. As reported by The Atlantic back in March 2016, white men without a college degree form the core of Trump's supporters.

Without economic advantage, a man's inner chauvinistic pig can break out to reassert dominance over women in another way. One way is to objectify women, as Trump was recorded doing with Billy Bush in 2005. Trump's coarse comments may have scared away some of the Republican mainstream, but plenty of his supporters have dismissed them as typical masculine 'locker-room talk' (a defence even shock-jock Howard Stern rejected).

Male chauvinists also use the state to assert their dominance over women. An example of this among a fair number of Trump supporters is the Twitter feed #repealthe19th – a cry to repeal the amendment that gave women the right to vote.

But women did not principally cause the economic woes that have left some voters so desperate as to think a chauvinist like Trump can save them. Indeed, it's precisely men like Trump who have used their power and privilege to widen the gap between the haves and have nots.

Trump's chauvinism will never make America greater than it is right now. Instead, his campaign has revealed just how damaging male chauvinism can be. And now, with his hyper-masculinity threatened by Clinton's edge in the polls, Trump is attacking the very democratic process a presidential candidate should passionately defend.

Assuming that not even Donald Trump can destroy American democracy, the real challenge begins for whoever is sworn in as president on January 20 2017. Americans need more economic security for their enlightened sides to shine through again. This means more good jobs at living wages for men as well as women. Only then can the country begin to close the social chasms revealed and fuelled by Trump's campaign – and only then can we banish chauvinism to the past, where it belongs.

Trump's 'promised land' of white masculine economic success

Populist campaign rhetoric is about making grandiose and demagogic statements. The more ambitious and adaptive a candidate's message is, the more it resonates with different kinds of voters. Donald Trump's successful campaign relied on his famous slogan 'Make America Great Again'. Its power is in the temporal scope of its promises, which invited white Americans to access their 'happy place' in the past, when America was great, and promised them that he would make that imagined past their future. Trump's past and future, I suggest, summon a promised land of white masculine economic productivity.

While Hillary Clinton was not a 'big promises' candidate and sought to keep the conversation about the present, Donald Trump tapped into bygone pasts and a future still to come. He told Americans how the greatness they yearn for, and they know to have existed in history, was stolen from them by 'the establishment'— Washington insiders who do not care about ordinary people. Trump fixated on the message that Americans were once great and can be great tomorrow.

This mirroring of past and future was at the centre of Trump's populist campaign message. In form, Trump's strategy seems reminiscent to Barack Obama's 2008 campaign, which owned the future as a promised site of hope and change. Obama, however, promised only a new and better future and did not continuously link it to the past. Obama himself as a Black man embodied change and did not look or sound like any previous president. However, Trump's promise was that of a return. It is a 'return' to a serene past however one imagines it.

That promise of a future return to a great America made sense because, without being explicit, it portrayed a white, economically-robust, and socially conservative America. The power in the use of this temporal and nostalgic trope is that it inspired white people across class lines. The strategic vagueness of the content of the message, such as 'Make America Great Again', was concealed by the intimacy of its nostalgic intonation. Trump's slogan painted images of a serene past of simpler politics and economics. Trump did not specify what period in history America was great. What exactly should be resurrected? This ambiguity was demonstrated in a Daily Show skit , in which Trump supporters were asked: when was America last great? Answers ranged from 1776, 1913, 1950s, to the 1980s. Of course, as the Daily Show presenters insinuated, those imagined pasts erase the political struggles of women and people of colour.

The past that Trump invoked is one where the factories hummed. White men made stuff and were content with their day's work. White family values prevailed. White men could say what they wanted. There was no political correctness. No one made a fuss about racism and misogyny. And men acted as men, and women as women. It is an imagined past before the first Black president and before Black protesters cried out in the streets of US cities about how their lives matter.

This is not to say that all Trump voters had the same vision of that past that included all these images. Rather, this is to make the point that the ambiguity of what kind of past and future Trump means is appealing to voters whether in relation to present-day economic stress and/ or racism and/ or misogyny.

The poetic invocations implied and enabled by Trump's message are a good reminder that voter choice is often difficult to verbalize. It is not a simple rational choice. Voters respond to what inspires them. Trump had a message of change to voters with a scope rooted in an imagined past and projected onto a new future. His success is in the populist mirroring of the past and future, both of which gave a vision of white masculine economic productivity.

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Attempting to understand Hillary Clinton's favourability ratings

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In every election since 1992 the candidate with the highest favourability rating has won the US election, with Gallop polls showing every victor polling above fifty percent favourability before the election. Hillary Clinton has struggled to get anywhere close to the fifty percent mark since announcing her candidacy in April 2015, a failure that may have cost her the presidency?

Her ratings collapse coincided with her entering the race. Gallop poll data shows that in April 2013 she had a 64% favourability rating among likely voters and 91% among Democrats, and she had been consistently sustaining ratings in the mid 60%'s from 2009-2012 while serving as Secretary of State. She maintained these ratings throughout the initial Senate investigation on Benghazi in January 2013 and the strong media personal media criticism that went alongside it. However, by 2015 Hillary Clinton's favourability ratings had slowly fallen to 50% as focus shifted towards an expected presidential campaign, and by June 2015 they had dropped sharply down nine points to 41% with a 44% unfavorability rating just months after launching her campaign for to become President of the United States in April. RealclearPolitics.com's average favourability polling over the last 18 months' tracks how her personal polling has continued to remain in the 40% range, but her unfavorability ratings have continued to climb reaching nearly 55% by November 2016.

In the media, this negative favourability towards Hillary's candidacy has been consistently framed as being self-inflicted damage caused by both the Benghazi and email scandals that have affected her campaign, and others during her husband's presidency. But this narrative does not correlate, there is a mismatch between the mediation of these events and the impacts on her favourability poll ratings. For example, the scandal about her emails only went public in July 2015 a month after her favourability rating had already fallen to a level which has been consistent ever since, and the same lack of correlation is reflected in timelines of the Benghazi investigation and polling. Political scandals often have short time frames and impacts with the media moving onto new stories with little lasting impact, with intense and sustained media interest required to keep the scandal in the front of people's minds. While in the media frenzy of a US election these scandals sustained media interest and were perhaps reflected in the increases in unfavourability over the election period they might not tell the whole story.

An alternative explanation was put forward by Nelson that Hillary's changing favourability ratings is directly related to how well she is conforming to gender expectations:

"When she was a traditional First Lady, she was popular; when she was gracious in defeat, accepting the Secretary of State job, she was popular; and when she was a Cabinet official who generally stayed out of the day-to-day political fights of Obama's first term, she was at her most popular ever (Nelson 2016)."

However as soon as Hillary starts to step outside those boundaries of accepted behaviour and tries to be more politically active her favourability ratings plummet. Brescoll and Okimoto support these observations. Their study found female political candidates face significant negative perceptions for the act of seeking power, while male candidates do not. Cultural stereotypes of women expect them to be communal, supportive and sensitive; when women break outside of these stereotypes they are framed as deviant and power obsessed. When female politicians try to take a more emotive approach they receive media coverage of a consistently different tone, being framed as demonstrating emotional irrationality and a lack of leadership and control. Hillary is aware of this process; Nelson quotes her observation:

"When I'm actually doing the work, I get re-elected with 67 percent of the vote running for re-election in the Senate. When I'm secretary of state, I have [a] 66 percent approval rating. And then I seek a job, I run for a job, and all of the discredited negativity comes out again".

Psychological accessibility of political judgements is more important in building favourability towards a candidate than the quantity or quality of those attributes, with the simplest core emotional response to a candidacy being more important and impactful than more detailed and nuanced reflections. This seems reflected in Hillary's personal polling. Likely voters suggest they think she is qualified (55%) and has the temperament (53%) to be US President, only 29% of people trust her, fundamentally undermining her legitimacy and favourability. In a presidential race that is as complex and as divisive as this one there are many factors that affect an outcome. Gender and the voting publics perceptions of female politicians may have played a more important role than is often discussed in public and media discourse.

A very queer Presidential election campaign: Personal reflections from an LGBT perspective

This is a 'feel' piece that includes some thinking. I have deliberately avoided using sources or checking the facts. Instead I have reflected on *living through* the campaign and what that has meant to me. I have generated what might be considered an 'approximate analysis' partly inspired by reading *Proxies: Essays in near knowing* (2016) and by being in close proximity to a hate crime during the campaign. In a queer way, I owe a very different form of appreciation to both.

"The gays will be better off under me" so stated Trump with the bluster and lack of consideration for words we got used to in this campaign! Was Hilary much better? Conventionally yes; uttering consistently supportive noises about LGBT issues, but crucially, she represented the mainstream in her approach to issues of gender and sexuality. Repeating the mantra "gay rights are human rights" to the point where one started to ponder, so did she once doubt this truism?

Whilst there was much queer about this campaign; that hair, her emails, the FBI, a Republican candidate who the last two Republican Presidents did not publically support and the first female candidate for 'high office'… Despite all of this, from an LGBT perspective it was actually rather conventional. The most affirmative reading of the two main candidates engagement with LGBT issues was little more than permission to join the mainstream is partially granted…but on our terms.

The notion that is was an electoral liability to be 'anti-gay' appeared to take hold in both camps, though this sentiment was clearly not shared amongst many Trump supporters. This position was superficially welcoming. However, it contributed to a re-presentation of the politics of sexuality that hid ambiguity, denied critique and excluded challenge to hetronormativity. In effect we had two versions of shallow inclusivity; queer cultural worldviews remained off limits.

Specifically I recall:

- Trump being 'accepting' of an NFL player kissing his boyfriend in public but complaining on behalf of 'rednecks' about how hard it is for them to express their true thoughts on this subject.
- Hilary complaining that gay rights had moved faster than women's rights in recent history (of course about half those identifying as LGBT are indeed women!).
- Trump reminding us that he lives in New York and actually knows some gay people, referring to *them* as 'tremendous lovely people'… how sweet.
- Clinton asserting support for transgender people who should not be held back from participating fully in 'our great American society'. An act of welcoming them 'inside', rather than confronting structures that constitute 'insider status'.
- Trump talking about how he will protect 'the gays' by hating another group. In this case 'Muslims' held responsible for the shooting in an Orlando nightclub that led to 29 deaths.
- Trump was keen to show just how 'red blooded' he was referring on several occasions to transgender people with feign disappointment; "she'd certainly be attractive as a real woman" and how being a lesbian was "a waste of raw talent".
- In several interviews where LGBT rights were raised Trump retorted to answering with a rhetorical question along the lines of "what do I know about gay men, I was bought up in a family to think differently about what we are supposed to do in our beds".

Our ability to put words into play creates what is possible (see the philosophies of Wittgenstein or Barthes). Words associated with LGBT were never queer, always orthodox. These were campaigns of containment, of 'holding in'. This view may seem perverse given this has been labelled the vilest campaign in history. But just think, what *would* Trump have really liked to say about vulnerable groups (we caught a pathetic glimpse with the 'bus tape'). Clinton too acted with reserve on hot queer topics such as fairness of health treatment access and religious bigotry under the banner of free speech. This containment was literal in relation to the candidates' past lives and misdemeanors and was metaphorical in relation to LGBT experiences; where 'what it is to live a secret' was kept concealed.

How could a presidential candidate ever speak from or for the margins? Obama whitened up, Hilary manned up, and any future LGBT candidate will no doubt straighten up. Given this, what meaningful contribution might this queering lens of the 2016 campaign offer? Firstly, that whilst political calculation defines candidate's engagement with LGBT issues it will perpetuate the construction of LGBT subjectivity *within* neoliberal forms of governance. Perform productively, distance yourself from deviance and you too can share our American dream.

Secondly, it speaks to a sense of cultural corrosion. Bringing to mind Norbert Elias's 1939 magnificently articulated 'The Civilising Process'. Trump's campaign in particular was shameless, unreflective and deliberately immodest. Elias explained the process that resulted in widespread distaste of dirt, danger, and disregard for others; Trump has legitimised bullying, bigotry and ignorance. Narcissistic delight was manifest in 'social cruelty' directed at anybody in his way. An almost medieval concept of gender relations and sexuality has thus reemerged in the public sphere. Even if a Trump presidency differs qualitatively to the campaign, the de-civilising affects will remain.

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Love didn't trump hate: Intolerance in the campaign and beyond

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Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 Presidential Election defied more than the polls; it also challenged feel-good assumptions about the inevitable triumph of progressive democratic ideals. In his campaign for the White House in 2008, Barack Obama invoked the saying that "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." In 2016, Hillary Clinton asserted, "Love trumps hate."

We now know such lines are more prayer than prediction. In spite of a steady stream of hateful rhetoric and policy positions against weaker sections of society—or, more chillingly, because of it—Trump scored major upsets in key states. How large a role hate played in Trump's ascent is disputed. His detractors say it defined his campaign; his defenders claim that it's not really what he is about.

The truth may lie in between. On the one hand, the new leader of the free world is not wedded to his positions. He is a lower order chauvinist than, say, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is committed to a Hindu nationalist agenda bent on dismantling India's post-independence multicultural order.

On the other hand, Trump's attacks on Mexicans and Muslims did amount to key election promises. They were not throwaway remarks like those of former Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew. Lee never let political correctness curb his indulgence for cultural and gender stereotypes, but he was also a defender of racial and religious equality—and would have eliminated without hesitation any would-be Modis and Trumps dabbling in incendiary communal politics in Singapore.

Immediate post-election analyses suggest that Trump bore into an underground cavern of seething hostility against the governing class. Post-election commentators say voters' animosity toward the establishment is understandable, considering how many Americans justifiably feel let down and left behind by policymakers. What this does not explain, though, is why minority-bashing had to be incorporated into an agenda for change.

This is probably because more rational responses were ideologically unpalatable. A social democratic revolution, as championed by Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren on the left, was anathema to the powerful 1 per cent that it aimed to dethrone, and even too unsettling for many among the 99 per cent that it was meant to help. It proved simpler to scapegoat minorities.

It is a tactic that has been used by demagogues around the world for generations: construct stark divides between 'us' and 'them'; blame them for our problems; and present oneself as the only leader clear-sighted enough to recognise them for what they are, and strong enough to deal with them. In the United States, such messages found a receptive audience among the many white Americans who are uneasy about the shift in their country's cultural centre of gravity toward greater diversity.

If you are seeking glimmers of hope, you might argue that Trump's bigotry did not run deep; that it was just a performance for short-term electoral gain. Even if this is true of Trump the man, it overlooks the fact that his campaign—contrary to some media portrayals—was not run solo. The movement included long-running, organised hate groups, none of which are going to change their spots now that they are on the winning side.

Most of the alarm has focused on the endorsements he received from David Duke and the Ku Klux Klan. There are lesser-known, but more influential, merchants of hate that have systematically and successfully inserted paranoid intolerance into US political discourse over the years. Anti-Muslim sentiment, for example, was cultivated by a fringe group of misinformation experts who claimed that Barack Obama is a Muslim, that American Muslims want to introduce Islamic law or sharia, and that their mosques preach violent jihad.

One of these think tanks was behind a debunked study that Trump cited to justify his proposed ban on Muslims entering the country. Anti-Muslim ideologues were named as Trump advisors. Even if Trump the candidate was merely putting on a show purely for campaign purposes, there is every risk that the bigotry espoused by his aides and advisors will be institutionalised within the Trump Presidency.

But if the 2016 campaign was full of warning sirens, it also contained signs of hope. The pushback against hateful rhetoric was not insignificant, and the fact that Trump won the White House does not mean he won the argument or silenced counterviews.

The mainstream news media, for all their failures, regularly factchecked his wild claims and called him out on his invective. Civil rights organisations like the Southern Poverty Law Center and the American Civil Liberties Union did their part. The military and national security establishment hinted at potential resistance against rabid Trumpism engaging in all-out war against Muslims.

Less noticed, but possibly more impactful in the long run, is opposition from within the Religious Right. Younger Christian Evangelicals who will inherit the movement appear comfortable with America's growing diversity and ready to resist against Trump's amoral demagoguery.

Perhaps it is still the case that the arc of history will bend toward justice.

Just not yet.

The blue-collar billionaire: explaining the Trump phenomenon

So, how did it happen? How did a self-aggrandizing billionaire real estate magnate, reality TV star who never held elected office capture the White House in 2016? How did a man who offered a regular spate of verbal aggression while articulating a series of grievances that resonated with disenfranchised white voters, emerge as the 45th U.S. President? A multitude of reasons, derived from social science research, explain the Trump phenomenon.

First, self-interest: the notion that working class voters gravitated to Trump because he promised to allay their economic misfortune. While there is evidence that some communities afflicted by unemployment trended Trump, self-interest has trouble explaining why many sectors not affected adversely by economic forces, as well as individuals not touched by trade or immigration, favored Trump. Self-interest, as political scientists know, is frequently overshadowed by symbolic politics.

Flowing from a symbolic politics framework is a second explanation of Trump's popularity: his law and order-based message that stirred concerns about 'them', the generalized other, a thematic (harking back to Nixon's 1968 campaign) that seemed to require the stern punitive presence of "the strict father," as George Lakoff has referred to it, accessing conservatives' preference for a morality dominated by strength and loyalty to the majority in-group: an America that enforces immigration laws and bars Muslims from entering the U.S.

Third, and more significantly, Trump adapted time-honored populism to fit the present historical moment, cleverly, compassionately – some would say exploitatively – calling on time-honored working class concerns with trade and immigration, packing them into a coherent populist frame (a la Brexit) that emphasized how elites exploited workers for their own benefit in foolhardy trade deals that took jobs away from workers, as well as job-crushing illegal immigration that put Americans at the mercy of 'criminal aliens'.

His 'Make America Great Again' served as a condensational symbol that called to mind recollections of past glories, perceived indignities, projected anger at presumed unfairly-achieved attainments of other groups, and a painful, poignant reminder that America was not 'good' or 'great' anymore, but could be if Trump were elected. The facts on trade, immigration and crime did not comport with his rhetoric (they were flat-out false), but his frame captured an emotional truth.

Trump's narrative resonated with the white working class because it addressed the powerlessness and frustration many workers felt in the midst of crushing technological and economic change, experienced tangibly in communities facing joblessness and attendant social decay, manifest in drug addiction and marital strife. He tapped into real fears Americans had, offering policy alternatives that Republican elites had conveniently elided, telling people who felt they were at the bottom of the heap their needs mattered. He was their blue-collar billionaire. But he also was a canny communicator, exploiting their anxieties for political gain.

Fourth, as cognitive scientific research indicates, Trump's focus on how much workers had lost, as a result (he claimed) of global trade deals, immigration, and a 'rigged' economic system, propelled people to take a chance. Although one might intuitively guess that blue-collar workers would be reluctant to risk it all, given all they had lost, research suggests individuals can experience more pain over losses than pleasure over gains, and as a consequence were willing to gamble because Trump offered the last hope that change could be wrested from a stagnant status quo.

A fifth factor, the most insidious, is racial prejudice, exemplified by evidence that voters most likely to support Trump in the primaries had a history of voting for segregationists and seemed to forgive his morally culpable statements, such as refusal to disavow support from a white nationalist leader. We need to be careful in making inferences of cause and effect. There were many Trump voters who voted for Obama. Yet tribal identification with 'whiteness' (augmented by a feeling that class-based bias against whites, shown in affirmative action, is insufficiently discussed) swelled his ranks.

Sixth, the Trump brand, showcased across the country with glitter and panache, linked with the ability to execute economic success, appealed to some Americans, who are more willing to forgive the ethical lapses of private sector executives ("it's business") than those committed by political leaders, from whom more is expected, and whose ethical scrapes (use of a private email server) are viewed as more metaphysically consequential than stiffing contractors.

Seventh, he exuded credibility. Although fact-checks showed he told more falsehoods than Clinton, he was perceived to be more trustworthy because he spoke boisterously and with much confidence (which research has shown enhances persuasion), in contrast to Clinton's seemingly disingenuous, careful speech, all of which congealed with the narrative media had woven for years about her lack of transparency, some parts rooted in her personality, others in gender bias.

Eighth, the news, hungering for ratings, gave Trump immense press, significantly more than other candidates. The exposure helped legitimize his candidacy when it was perceived as a circus performance, helping to build his campaign.

Finally, Clinton, for all her experience, failed to develop a believable brand image. She did not forge a connection, nor campaign heavily, with working class whites ambivalent about Trump, thus gifting to Trump votes she might have captured. In the abyss of her missteps was borne the ultimate media-age president.

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Belonging, racism and white backlash in the 2016 US Presidential Election

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Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 presidential election has been attributed to disaffection among the American populace and its disengagement with the US political system, leading to a seismic shift towards populism. However, in common with Brexit, dominant discourses in Trump's campaign centred on issues around belonging and identity with clearly marked boundaries of inclusion and exclusion.

As Matthew Hughey argued in 2012, a hierarchy of Whiteness determines levels of belonging and citizenship in America, with Whites enjoying a privileged status. The othering of non-Whites echoed throughout the Trump campaign – which some argue is the key to his political success.

However, Hilary Clinton marginally won a greater share of votes than Trump – despite his presidential win. According to Pew Research Center (PRC), Clinton received 59.6m votes, compared to Trump's 59.4m. Trump's victory was secured through a larger number of Electoral College votes.

Former Ohio State Senator Nina Turner, stated in a CNN interview earlier this year, that America was built on racism and sexism where the all-White 'founding fathers' drafted the US Constitution that excluded Blacks, since they were legally defined as 3/5ths of a human being, or mere chattel to be owned and enslaved by Whites.

Slavery is the reason the Electoral College voting system was established under the 12th amendment in 1787 - to protect slave states that had more slaves than free men who were eligible to vote. The 12th Amendment permitted the South to include slaves in its electoral count, giving the region an advantage over the north, that would otherwise outnumber the south in eligible free voters.

The Democrat and Republican parties have always been racially divided. Throughout the recent history of presidential elections, 90 per cent of African Americans have voted for the Democrats, while most Whites have voted Republican. In last week's Presidential Election, 58% of Whites voted for Trump, while 65% of Hispanics and 88% of African Americans voted for Clinton (PRC).

While people of colour in the US overwhelmingly voted Democrat, Clinton was unable to replicate the spectacular Democrat gains in the 2012 Presidential campaign. Back then 71% of Hispanics voted for Obama, along with 93% of African Americans (PRC). But in 2016, notwithstanding her general unpopularity with American voters - Clinton had to contend with a forceful White backlash.

As Mathew Hughey explained, the recent White backlash can be traced back to 2008 when Barack Obama became the first Black president of the US. It found expression through the public questioning of Obama's American nationality legitimised through mainstream media coverage, and through the Tea Party movement with its links to the Klu Klux Klan and other far right groups. Their mission statement to 'take our country back' (from non-Whites presumably), resonated throughout the Trump campaign.

Let us not forget Trump's 'promise' to ban Muslims from entry to the US, increase surveillance of them and create a national register – nor his reference to Mexican immigrants as 'rapists' and 'criminals'.

Bruce Bartlett argues that Trump's political success can be attributed to his dexterity in feeding White perceptions of 'reverse racism' – the belief that Whites are more racially disadvantaged than people of colour – who are also perceived as responsible for their 'discrimination'. The growth of the non-White population in the US has driven more Whites to the Republican party, to the point where it has become a racial interest group that exists to protect and maintain White supremacy, with Trump at its helm.

Cyberpsychologist Mary Aiken describes Trump as 'a troll who has jumped off the internet and into the real world', leading to a cyber-migration of extreme racism that encourages people to act on their racist beliefs. The increase in racial abuse and violence towards people of colour post-election, suggests that America is on a dangerous path.

But there is a glimmer of hope that this path is a temporary one. First is the reality that while America is possibly more racially divided than ever, almost 60 million Americans voted against Trump. Voter turnout was the lowest in 20 years, it is argued, because neither Trump nor Clinton were regarded as progressive candidates. The personalised, vitriolic, debates between Trump and Clinton took American politics to an all-time low.

However, mainstream America is already looking for a future beyond Trump and the most popular person in politics right now according to a WSJ/NBC poll on 9 November is former First Lady Michelle Obama. Her momentous speech in the wake of the sexual abuse revelations about Trump, addressed both raced and gendered inequalities in a manner that promotes cultural democracy and unites a divided nation around a common humanity.

Despite the calls for Michelle Obama to run for president in 2020, as the Guardian reports on 11 November, this is most unlikely. But the popularity of Michelle Obama is the clearest indication that progressive politics can be a reality again, when the right candidate delivers the right message. The question now is, if not Michelle Obama, then who?

The theology of American exceptionalism

Every four years America has a national revival, where candidates traverse the nation preaching about what it means to be American and the nation's future. While these candidates' sermons may differ, they agree that the US is exceptional; it should lead the world. Commonly, they justify this esteemed image of the nation by arguing that its exalted status is a divine endowment.

The theology of American exceptionalism has its origins in the rhetoric of the New England Puritans who viewed their development in America as divine will. John Winthrop famously argued that America is a "City upon a hill" that had gained God's favor. However, these divine blessings are not unconditional, America's moral direction is under constant judgement. The nation is always at risk of losing its heavenly grace if it violates God's will. This theology has buttressed our definition of America and dictated its behavior. Recognizing the power of the theology of American exceptionalism, political leaders create their version of the American gospel within this framework.

During the 2016 presidential election, Hillary Clinton evangelized that staying course would ensure divine blessings. Conversely, Donald Trump preached that the nation had lost its divine favor. Much like the rhetoric of the "Lost Cause", a theme articulated by former Confederates in response to their defeat by the Union, Mr. Trump argued that incompetent and corrupt leadership caused the nation to lose its glory. Specifically, Mr. Trump tapped into an American gospel which focused on purity and called for the nation to rid itself of infidels and heretics. Political correctness and diversity had stripped the rightful leaders of the nation from their prominence and taken the nation off its divine path. For the nation to re-ascend in the divine hierarchy, it must reverse its course of action, and only he could save the nation's corrupted soul.

Unlike past presidential candidates, who used implicit language, Mr. Trump was overt. In announcing his candidacy, he painted Mexican immigrants as the infidels who tainted the nation's soul with their immoral behavior. Later he argued that the American Muslim community was actively subverting the nation from its divine path. While Hillary Clinton sermonized that America's blessings come from religious and racial diversity, he argued diversity brought in heretics that must be expunged. Only through this purge could the nation return to its divinely dictated path.

Many questioned the sincerity of this rhetoric and attempted to advance a counter gospel. One need only look at the rhetoric of religious and political leaders at the Democratic National Convention to see the counter gospel in action. However, the outcome of the election demonstrates that Mr. Trump's gospel is what resonated with the American public. Numerous studies demonstrate that Trump supporters were fearful of the nation's racial and religious diversification. These Americans saw the dwindling presence of Whites and Christians as corrupting the nation's soul.

This phenomenon of national soul cleansing is not limited to the United States. The United Kingdom's vote to leave the European Union along with other European nations pushing back against racial and religious diversity demonstrates that citizens in western industrialized nations feel threatened by globalization.

The American case is unique because of the continued insistence that the nation's destiny is divinely inspired. Furthermore, American religious and racial identity are tightly intertwined. The highly segregated nature of America's churches informs us that religious similarities cannot overcome racial dissimilarities. Because of this, White Americans perceive an assault on the nation's religious identity as an attack on their racial identity.

Mr. Trump's tapped into these fears and crafted a gospel that converted these citizens from passive to active. His speeches reassure them that they will be led out of the wilderness of racial and religious diversity. By advocating stricter immigration policies, instilling law and order in minority communities, and exorcising incompetent and corrupt politicians, he calls for returning control of the nation to those truly intended to be American. Much like the southern leaders who emerged after Reconstruction, his gospel promises national and global redemption.

Even with the success of Mr. Trump's great revival, his American gospel is in a struggle with several others. Just as the gospel of slavery competed with the gospel of abolition and the gospel of segregation competed with the gospel of racial equality, the gospel of Trump will not go unchallenged. His combatants will be those who view diversity and protecting the marginalized as a divine edict. Individuals, such as Rev. William Barber and his Moral Mondays movement, will be tasked with converting the nation to this counter gospel. Soon we will see the effects of Mr. Trump's great revival through policy and citizen action. Further, we will see the gospels crafted in response. But no matter what gospel is presented, it will be articulated in the theology of American exceptionalism.

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Organizing in Trump's America: the perspective of the disability community

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The 2016 Presidential election was far from ordinary for minorities in America. Following eight years of Obama administration, which placed a great deal of emphasis of inclusivity and empowerment for under-represented groups, the 2016 campaign was characterized by a series of inflammatory statements about women, African-Americans, immigrants, refugees, Muslims, and persons with disabilities by Republican nominee Donald Trump. In one particularly controversial episode, Trump openly mocked a disabled reporter during a campaign rally in South Carolina on 24 November 2015. This moment was shared instantly by thousands of people on social media and later incorporated in a powerful TV ad by the Hillary Clinton campaign. At one point, opinion polls identified this episode as Trump's "worst offense" during the course of the entire election campaign. Given the level of visibility that disability issues achieved in this election, it is useful to review the response of the disability community, the role of social media in mobilizing the disabled vote, and offer some insights into what the future may hold for grassroots disability organizing under a Trump presidency.

The disability community received an unprecedented amount of attention in the 2016 election. The difference between the two major party campaigns in this area could not have been greater. While the controversial episode cited above was the only instance in which the Trump campaign 'engaged' with disability issues, Hillary Clinton proposed several policy initiatives on issues directly relevant to Americans with disabilities and their families. Clinton's website included specific pages dedicated to disability and healthcare issues, assistance programs such as Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act (colloquially known as 'Obamacare'), mental health, Alzheimer's disease, and disabled veterans. The democratic convention in Philadelphia featured several speakers with disabilities. Clinton herself gave a major speech on disability policy on 21 September. Although this was described by some news outlets as an 'unusual push' for a presidential candidate, it stood as testimony to the growing influence of a non-traditional constituency that, according to recent estimates, now includes 35.4 million registered US voters. In a close election such as this one, it was strategic for Clinton to connect with the disability community, which is much more politically diverse and not guaranteed to vote Democratic than many assume.

Americans with disabilities were no spectators in the 2016 campaign and instead became involved directly in a wide range of initiatives to mobilize their peers. On the one hand, established disability rights organizations such as the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) and the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) campaigned tirelessly to encourage voter registration among people with disabilities, including through a targeted social media outreach. On the other hand, young disabled activists used Facebook and Twitter to launch the #CripTheVote campaign, designed to engage both voters with disabilities and candidates in discussions about disability-related issues. This was an innovative and successful grassroots initiative driven by a new and emerging generation of disabled leaders who are familiar and comfortable with social media technologies, which they seem eager to use to further their advocacy goals.

On November 8, Donald Trump won the presidential election and will lead the US for the next four years. This surprise result has already generated a high level of concern in the American disability community, with prominent advocates pleading with the incoming administration to protect the rights of persons with disabilities. While it would be premature to speculate about what the future may hold for American with disabilities under a Trump presidency, the conditions seem right for a new surge in disability rights activism supported by social and mobile media. As the experience of the welfare reform in the UK between 2010-12 taught us, crisis can be a powerful catalyst for change and mobilization revival among large and diverse groups such as the disability community. American disability rights advocates are preparing themselves to face a Republican White House and Congress, and soon a conservative-majority Supreme Court. Obamacare and its provisions for people with pre-existing health conditions may be on the line. Medicaid entitlements are likely to be threatened. It seems that innovative organizing efforts for the disability community did not stop on polling day, but instead will become ever more important once the dust has settled over the election result.

Why are the German-Americans Trump's most loyal supporters?

German-Americans paved Trumps road into the White House -- right through the rural and deindustrialized landscapes of Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. When talking about ethnicity and immigration background, we frequently use labels such as African-American, Asian-American, Italian-American and Mexican-American. But despite the fact that currently about 46 Million Americans claim German ancestry and therefore constitute the largest national heritage group in the United States, one hardly ever encounters the term German-American. Who are the German-Americans, and why did they support Donald Trump?

Who are the German-Americans?
Millions of Germans arrived in the United States between 1850 and 1890. Many settled in the Great Lakes Region. As farmers and skilled workers they transformed the mid-western wilderness and fueled the industrialization with manpower and entrepreneurial spirit. Many German-Americans were freethinkers, fighting against slavery and for women's suffrage. They founded newspapers and labor unions. Socialist mayors Emil Seidel and Frank Zeidler dominated Milwaukee politics in the first half of the 20th century. So, how did a mostly progressive immigrant group that shaped the progressive era and set the stage for liberalism turn conservative?

The German-American Trump Connection
After having initially claimed to be of Swedish-American ancestry, Donald Trump later acknowledged his paternal grandfather's birthplace as Kallstadt, located in what had been the Kingdom of Bavaria in the 19th century. However, arguing that German-Americans were attracted to the president-elect based on his German-American heritage is missing the point. The pro-Trump swing vote occurred in states that had been solidly blue for a generation. This region, formerly known as the Blue-State Firewall, correlates with a high concentration of German immigrant settlements in the 19th century as the census map shows.

Progressive German Immigrants turned Conservative German-Americans
Today's descendants of German immigrants in the American Midwest have lost an authentic link to the cultural heritage of their forefathers. This happened through rapid assimilation, partly to avoid stigmatization in the wake of two World Wars. German-Americans stopped using their language. Their newspapers disappeared. They anglicized their names to become more American more quickly than any other European immigrant population. Assimilation to conservativism was part of this process.

Indifferent towards their heritage, few German-Americans resumed after decades of hibernating a public articulation of their heritage. However, those who do connected to their heritage, have developed practices that bear little resemblance with what life looked like during the migration period. Cultural heritage events construct a coarse definition of Germanness that is centered around Beer, Bratwurst, and Lederhosen and silences the liberal and progressive ideas and actions of many ancestors.

The shift from liberal to conservative views can also be attributed to occupational patterns typical among German immigrants. Agriculture and entrepreneurial craftsmanship generated wealth that sustained families and communities for more than a century until globalization undermined the economic sustainability of family farms and domestic manufacturing. Those who could, left their rural communities and deindustrialized cities. Those who remained suffered twofold as economic hardship coincided with the end of the lifestyle many German-Americans shared. Steady decline, the collapse of communal structures, and the loss of a rich cultural heritage that provided a sense of being, made people receptive for Trump's anti-establishment gestures and his xenophobic messages.

German-Americans are not just the 'White Vote'
Analyzing the electoral patterns in the Great Lakes Region merely in terms of a 'whitelash' underlines the helplessness of political commentators in the efforts to explain the inaccuracy of polls, predictions, and probabilities. Despite the fact that political analysts routinely acknowledge diversity within the Hispanic vote and differentiate between, for example, Mexican-Americans in Texas, Cuban-American in Florida, and Puerto Ricans in New York, they treat the 'white vote' as one monolithic block. Their models ignore specific voting behaviors and ideological patterns that are particular to German-Americans and – for that matter -- any other national heritage group that is 'ethnically invisible' in mainstream America.

An undifferentiated perception on the 'white vote' ignores the complex histories and the super-diversity among Caucasian Americans. Instead, pollsters and pundits must pay fine-grained attention to migration experiences and voting motives of white Americans. They may realize that their predictions will become more accurate, if they analyze voters of European descent with a higher level of nuance. We may be in for many surprises - and be less surprised on election night.

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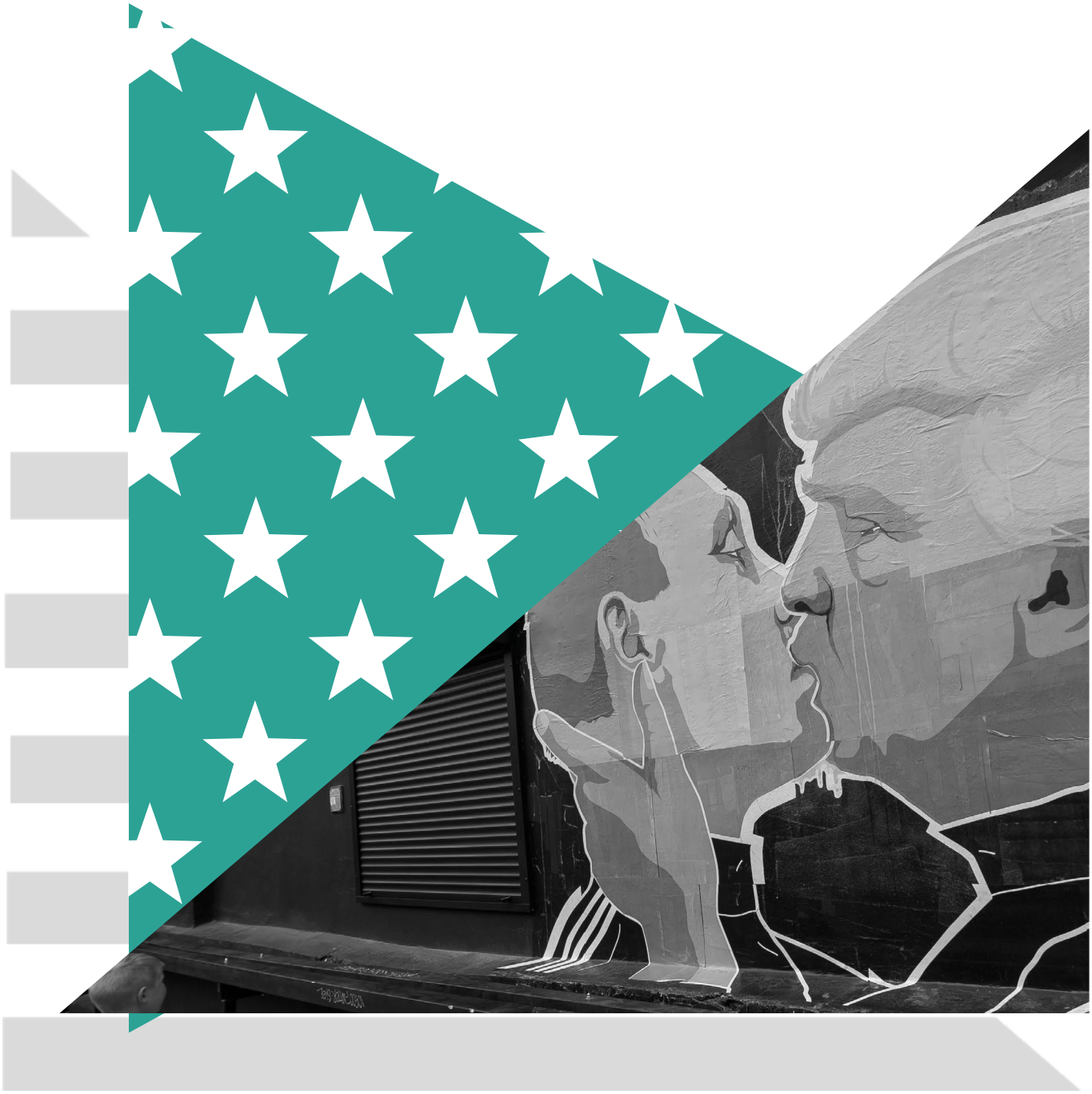

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Overseas Perspectives

Media coverage of the US election in Arabic, Chinese, and Russian media

The US Presidential election typically draws significant interest from overseas, both among allies, like Germany or the UK, and among geopolitical rivals, such as Russia and the People's Republic of China. There are multiple reasons for this, including the outsized impact of US economic, political, and cultural strengths. But beyond the obvious interest in how presidential policies might impact relations or interests of other countries, there are consequences for how nations view US political values and processes as well.

Given the obvious geopolitical tensions related to China, Russia, and the Arab world during the campaign, we studied media coverage in each of those regions to determine the dominant narrative about the election, and initial responses to the victory of Donald Trump from each country. We incorporated analysis of multiple news sources, triangulating between official or government-aligned news sources, oppositional or independent news sites, and other sites without express political agenda, such as economics or business news sites.

During the campaign, Arabic media expressed concern over both candidates, but especially Trump. His comments regarding potential bans on Muslims entering the United States were especially troubling throughout the region. Clinton was largely covered as a more 'responsible' candidate, but her association with Obama-era policies regarding non-intervention in the Syrian civil war and the rise of ISIL was also covered extensively.

After the election, reporting on the outcome largely followed the narratives in major US news outlets that Trump won because of economic concerns, although some articles appeared that seemed to indicate that a Trump victory would lesson Jewish influence on US politics. Qatar's Al Jazeera ran an extensive story on Trump's victory, focusing especially on the role of the US media. The broadcaster cast Trump's victory as a victory over US media, which had largely conspired to make sure that Clinton would win the race.

During the campaign period, Chinese media also covered the election prominently, focusing especially on Trump's business experience and his outsider status to the political process. Although many Chinese on social media were very supportive of Trump, as an outsider and as an opponent of corruption, the main media outlets focused more on Trump's criticisms of China as a currency manipulator, and warned that he might create a trade war with China. A number of Chinese media outlets repeated a claim that such a trade war would cost 5 million US jobs. These media outlets, however, refrained from showing an outright preference, usually masking criticism by citing the words of US academics or media figures. As the Trans Pacific Partnership is largely seen in China as an attempt to 'contain' China geopolitically, there was favorable coverage of Trump's opposition to the agreement.

After the election, Chinese media focused on the challenges that Trump would face as a political novice and in repairing the damage done to his reputation and to the established political parties. Xinhua, China's main news agency, ran an extensive article detailing the difficulties Trump would have in undoing the damage of his language during the campaign, which helped to lead to social disintegration and disarray.

Russia's involvement in the election was extraordinary, both from the fears that Russia was actively seeking to help Trump win, as well as the seeming mutual respect of Trump with Vladimir Putin. Russian media during the campaign focused on Trump's business acumen, his strong leadership skills, and his willingness to pull away from NATO. Trump was portrayed as a 'reasonable' candidate, and contrasted sharply with Clinton, which Russian media tied to the numerous conflicts over Russian engagement in Syria, the Ukraine, and elsewhere.

After the election, there was obvious satisfaction with Trump's election, with wide reports of the membership of the Duma breaking into applause once Trump's victory was announced. An article in the Moskovskij Komsomolets, a Moscow-based daily, argued that Trump was like Gorbachev, revealing the internal fractures and weaknesses of what seemed like a strong and prosperous country. What was truly surprising about the Russian coverage was the number of articles reprinted from Western press outlets, such as the New York Times, the Independent, and other outlets, which argued that a Trump victory meant vindication for Russia. One such piece, which originated in the Daily Beast, published by Inopressa, was entitled "Now it is Putin's world."

We found that global press coverage of the election was widespread and, although it took cues from prominent US outlets, shaped the coverage to reflect local or national concerns. These outlets reported on all of the scandals covered in the US press, but with an additional overlay of where US ties and relationships with the various countries would go under the next president. By and large, the coverage also became a way to criticize both US political values and geopolitical strength. The scandals of the election were used to illustrate the deficiencies of US democratic practice, and the outcome of the election was used to show the inherent contradictions and weaknesses of US society.

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US Presidential Campaign-2016 in a metaphorical mirror of the Russian media

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We live by metaphors. They help us understand the world around us, form opinions, represent the ideas cognized and digested. Many researchers argue that metaphors have always been the major way to conceptualize, categorize, and organize human experience. What is more important, these metaphors do not only shape our perception of the reality, but they also define the way we think and act. People behind the media know that very well and use metaphors as a powerful tool of persuasion used to manipulate public opinion. Thus, the media becomes a kind of metaphorical mirror, on the one hand, reflecting public views and experiences, on the other hand, creating a certain attitude towards some key problems and events.

Every major development that happens in the world today gets its unique reflection in this metaphorical mirror. The US presidential campaign was not an exception. Russian media, as well as people all over Russia, were monitoring the situation with the United States presidential election of 2016. This heightened interest in the results of the campaign is totally understandable: the outcome of the elections would have dramatically influenced the relationships between Russia and the United States. So many people, despite not usually taking a keen interest in politics, were tracking the news, reading and discussing different prognoses, making assumptions and forecasts. So how was this campaign and the candidates reflected in the metaphorical mirror of the Russian media?

The whole campaign was referred to as an adventure TV-series, because everything happened very quickly, with many sensational revelations, and ended in an unexpected way. People were quite anxious to watch the next episode of this nail-biting sequel, waiting for its denouement. Sometimes the campaign was perceived as a circus, where each candidate, as a magician, pulled a new rabbit out of his or her hat. An interesting metaphor was used by Russian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Maria Zakharova, who metaphorically called the US presidential election "a tango of three", because each time the candidates were talking to the electorate they couldn't help but mention Russia and Vladimir Putin.

Talking about the Democrat and Republican presidential candidates, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, their metaphorical portrayals, created by the Russian media, were extremely contradictory. On the one hand, Hillary Clinton was referred to as a lady, very stylish and self-assured, a role model for young and ambitious women who know what they want and how they can get it. She was also compared with a brood hen that takes care of her nation, especially children and women. On the other hand, her mixed feelings about Russia and open criticism of Vladimir Putin led to the formation of a negative metaphorical image in the Russian media. Hillary Clinton was portrayed as pig in a poke, a queen of chaos, a former teacher whom you still hate even being an adult. Her sharp rhetoric was responsible for picturing Hillary as a road roller, which devours everything in its path. She was even compared to a Russian fairy-tale character of Baba-Yaga, an old witch that steals, cooks, and eats her victims, usually children. However, in many papers the authors were trying to explain this kind of behavior and justify Hillary by using a metaphor of an honours student, a perfectionist who always struggles to be the first in everything.

As for Donald Trump, his metaphorical reflection was much more vivid and diverse. On the one hand, he was pictured as a narcissist who loves himself and is afraid to 'loose face', a Koshei-the Immortal – a famous Russian fairy-tale character, who is extremely rich and spends all his time counting his treasures. On the other hand, many negative metaphors connected with Donald Trump were used in a positive way, for example, he was seen as a devil in a good way because he can convince anyone of anything. It is interesting, but the authors use mostly zoomorphic metaphors to describe Donald Trump and his campaign. He was often called a notorious and stubborn bull, putting the heat on his campaign, a rooster, who is loud, provoking and battailous, a red stallion, who is ready to win the American rodeo. The media also compared him to a Russian politician Vladimir Zhirinovsky, an outspoken party leader in Russia's parliament, who is, in his turn, sometimes compared to Donald Trump.

Nevertheless, let us hope that all these images will be perceived merely as reflections in the mirror. Are they true or distorted? Can Russians really judge a leader upon these metaphorical reflections? Only time will tell their accuracy. Though never forget that actions make the person, not his or her reflection in the mirror.

The Greek perspective

For many years, party identification was an intrinsic part of the social identity for the majority of Greek citizens, which identified themselves as supporters of the centre-right party New Democracy or of the centre-left party, PASOK. The last few years, as Greece struggled with the economic crisis and the country's own identity, the citizens turned their backs on the political establishment that has been formed and in January 2015 elected a new prime minister, who has promised them they would soon return to the 'good old days' of prosperity.

The aftermath of that election is well known. The new prime minister and his party, SYRIZA formed a coalition with a small right-wing party, AN.EL., to ensure the parliamentary majority. That was followed by six months of government negotiations with the EU, the referendum, the new bailout programme and new elections in September 2015, with the same two parties forming a government.

The Greek public has been very vocal throughout this period expressing a wide range of emotions in social media. It has been widely recognised, and even former political allies of the current government have admitted, that social media have been an integral part of the promotion of the ruling party's positions. For the past year, new political issues arise every day and it seems that new party dynamics are starting to develop and everything is shared and commented on online by everyone. Even though the digital divide is still high in Greece compared to other E.U. countries, social media are an important platform for information, especially since traditional Greek media are not considered trustworthy and impartial.

In the past few months, Greek social media users were commenting on the primaries and the presidential candidacies but it was the last few weeks before the elections that almost every single Greek Facebook user seemed to make a prediction on their outcome. A few days before the US election, the Greek public's attention was side-tracked by a government reshuffle and the appointment of a very young, well-presented woman as new minister of labour, social security & social solidarity. Despite that, one day before the election's result, almost all Greek Facebook users had shared a thought, a meme, a photo, an article about the US presidential candidates. It is quite interesting that especially before the elections, the majority of these people both from the centre-right and centre-left expressed their support for Hillary Clinton; others (that previously supported Bernie Sanders) were sceptical about the democratic candidate but would still consider her as the lesser of two evils; then, there were the Trump enthusiasts (there is even a Facebook group created by his Greek supporters) who related themselves with his anti-establishment and anti-immigration rhetoric.

The majority of parties also favoured the democratic candidate, while the republican candidate was supported by the extreme-right party, Golden Dawn, and AN.EL.. Panos Kammenos, the leader of AN.EL. and Greek minister of defence, was one of the first Greek politicians that congratulated the new President-elect via Twitter. He is, after all, an avid social media user and has been criticised for many of his posts in the past.

Minutes after the first results were published and it was obvious that Donald Trump would be the new President of the US, the Greek public seemed surprised but not shocked. At that moment, social media users focused on the common characteristics of the President-elect with the Greek Prime Minister and emphasised their shared tendency for populism and rhetoric about the 'good people' who need to unite against the governing and corrupt elites. In the following days the interest focused on the common characteristics of the two men and the effects of the new elected US government on the Greek interests. President-elect Donald Trump was no longer portrayed as being that bad, but as a man that values his Greek-American supporters and advisors.

For many Greek social media users, the results of the British E.U. referendum and the US elections gave them a sense of vindication. In their opinion, other nations make the same mistakes and even worse decisions than them. Political partisanship in Greece is more fluid than ever and the new political identity of the Greek citizens seems to shift the focus from parties to ideologies and specifically, to those who are against and those who support populism.

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The richest Slovenian son-in-law: the Slovenian perspective

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Presidential elections in United States are always in public eye, even in small and rather distant countries, such as Slovenia. However, in the case of 2016 US presidential election, Slovenian interest is much more personal. Republican candidate Donald Trump is currently married to a Slovenian wife; Melania Trump (nee Melanija Knavs and renamed to Melania Knauss). The interest in Trump in Slovenian media and public exists since the fact that Melania Knavs married what was a symbol of an American success story. Slovenian media were following Trump successes as well as failures due to this marriage. In this manner, the first reaction to Trump's announcement he was running for the US presidency was concentrated on the fact that Slovenia might contribute a first lady for the first time in the American history. With the development of the Republican primaries optimism was increasing as well as the interest, not only in the development of the campaign as well as in the reality. The Slovenian community in the USA was strongly supportive towards the idea of a Slovenian first lady (even when they were more supportive to the Democratic party).

With the Republican convention approaching and attempts of personal discreditation, Melania started to lose popularity in Slovenia. Naked photos were rather positively accepted, since it was known that her career was in modelling. However, the confusion with her education (with no official record publicly available) and her long-term reported refusal of Slovenia and the Slovenian language raised negative sentiments. Her plagiarized speech at the convention, together with poor performance in English made her a subject of fun, not only in American but also among the Slovenian public, which started to lean towards the position that her performances could be considered harmful for the image of Slovenia in the world.

Trump's sexual scandal, put Melania in the spotlight again. Her defence of her husband was reported predominantly as a subject of amusement, due to her language abilities as well as her obviously naive responses. Her story of success in the US became a story of the 'gold-digger' who caught a rich man. At the same time, occasional appearances of Ivanka Trump was seen as indicating that the actual first lady will be Ivanka, due to her ability to perform effectively in public. Slovenian analysts declared the political death of Trump, and Melania was considered as irrelevant or even part of the problem, since she was unable to effectively support her man. Hence interest in the US presidential campaign reduced.

However, Žižek supported the election of Trump as a way to initiate political change (similar to Brexit, which is considered a demand for a different politics and not necessary actual exit from the EU). Slovenian analysts/scientists predominantly agree that Trump's election would be hazardous due to his lack of predictability in international relations, where competences of the US president are highest. In the same time Melania entered the spotlight once again, with the speech in Philadelphia. Which was again proved she could not perform appropriately as a first lady. She was unable to improve her strongly Slavic English in the course of 20 years (despite analysis showing her broken English is rather sign of her discomfort than anything else).

After her constant glorification of the USA as the promised land she became subject of fun, not only in US talk shows, but also among the Slovenian public. Her success became disgrace and Slovenian media (regardless of political preferences) concentrated on the usual US presidential election reporting. It is possible to gain the impression that Slovenia excluded Melania due to her failure to present herself as a smart, adaptable and virtuous woman as well as due to her publicly reported rejection of Slovenian roots. Trump descended from richest Slovenian son-in-law to just another Republican presidential candidate, who can potentially harm unstable world peace, for which the USA are predominantly held responsible in critical circles of Slovenian intellectual elite.

The election day brought new surprises, proving all analytics, certain Clinton' victory as granted, wrong. Slovenian media reported the electoral result with enthusiasm and reset the reporting on Melania as the success story of a Slovenian woman who was to become the next first lady. Despite a certain level of (rather unjustified) pride, Slovenia will be much more affected by the American policies, than by the fact that first lady has Slovenian roots (which she misused in her political campaign, rejecting her fatherland and mother tongue). Media now speculate on whether Trump will perform well as President; Slovenia media are equally concerned if Melania is able to leave any meaningful impression as first lady.

Trying to avoid Trump: A Canadian experience

Unlike other contributors, I tried to *avoid* media exposure to the 2016 US election campaign. My reasoning for this unstructured social experiment? I was ineligible to vote, I live in Canada, I study Canadian politics, I am busy. I would loosely simulate the floating voters who pay little attention to politics, and who take information shortcuts to form basic impressions about leaders. My non-representative sample of one constitutes something of a control to illustrate the omnipresence of the campaign and captivation with the demagoguery of Donald Trump.

I live in North America's easternmost city, St. John's. I also spend time in a tiny rural community, population 110 on Sundays before the church closed down. My media consumption was a strict diet of small portions of Canadian news television, local Newfoundland radio, and Canadian news websites and email listserves. I watched bits of the debates, and had some brief exposure to American networks ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox and CNN. I did not use social media or a smartphone, and avoided conversation with others about the topic.

Here are my observations as I tried to avoid Trump.

During the primaries, Trump's use of Instagram showed how an inexpensive controlled mechanism can build a political brand. His posts were information subsidies for the global media – free content that is accessible and easy to reuse. Provocative remarks and lewd behaviour fed an appetite for dramatic storytelling. Critics' ensuing outrage was delicious theatre of heroes and villains. Forget public policy: this was a never-ending story arc involving public personas, with audiences drawn to part soap opera, part sports contest. As Trump's celebrity and underdog story grew, American politics became infotainment on an international scale. By the time he accepted the Republican nomination, Canadian news had spotted a ratings winner, analogous to the escapades of Rob Ford, Toronto's infamous crack-smoking mayor (on this, see Duncan Koerber's 2014 article about crisis communication in the *Canadian Journal of Communication*). It became impossible to avoid Trump because everyone wanted to talk about the shocking behaviour of a populist who eschews conventional wisdom.

It was soon a norm to evoke Trump in every social setting. Posters at Memorial University advertised public talks, ranging from a "Trump and Tacos" politics event to an English professor evoking Trumpian literary analogies. At a talk to discuss my book about Canadian political communication, the first questions were about Trump. At a staff meeting, an apolitical woman confessed interest in the election, explaining "it makes me feel dirty." People with no post-secondary education in households that are otherwise interested only in local Newfoundland news became glued to CNN, watching late into the night. As Election Day neared, the Canadian Television Network's news channel and website featured a digital countdown. The St. John's chapter of Equal Voice, an organization that seeks to elect Canadian women, hosted an election night event. On the morning of November 9, St. John's CBC radio uncharacteristically held a local call-in show about the results.

As with Ford, the tone of Canadian news and the public sphere was a mixture of perplexity, anxiety, morbid fascination and, above all, classism. Pollsters relayed that Canadians overwhelmingly preferred Hillary Clinton. Americans would want to relocate to Canada in the event of a Trump victory and realtors were on standby. A website urged citizens to move to Cape Breton, an island in Atlantic Canada. After the vote was in, the Canadian immigration website crashed. There is both smugness and relief about Canada being led by Justin Trudeau, the dashing Liberal prime minister. Meanwhile, Conservative Party leadership contestant Kellie Leitch is grabbing headlines by evoking Trump as she rallies against Canadian elites and calls for immigrants to be screened for Canadian values.

Why were so many Canadians caught up in the American election? The globalization of news and communications technology is one explanation. Beat reporters have become multitaskers operating in a digital-first, mobile-first environment. In Newfoundland newsrooms, journalists stare at computer screens and smartphones, chasing whatever is trending on social media. Content comes in from Toronto and digital information subsidies constitute clickbait. Canadian coverage of American politics constricted attention that might otherwise have been directed at resolving local issues, or perhaps Hurricane Matthew which in early October caused mass destruction and deaths in Haiti.

My take-away is that a vote for Trump was likely a vote against elites concentrated in urban centres who are perceived as promoting metropolitan righteousness and who frown upon rural citizens. Social activists' moral condemnation of a plain-speaking populist stirred anger against an establishment seen to be advancing a politically correct orthodoxy. More broadly, Canadians and others should question the implications of a global media system that displaces coverage of local public policy and human disasters in the developing world in favour of infotainment originating from major media centres.

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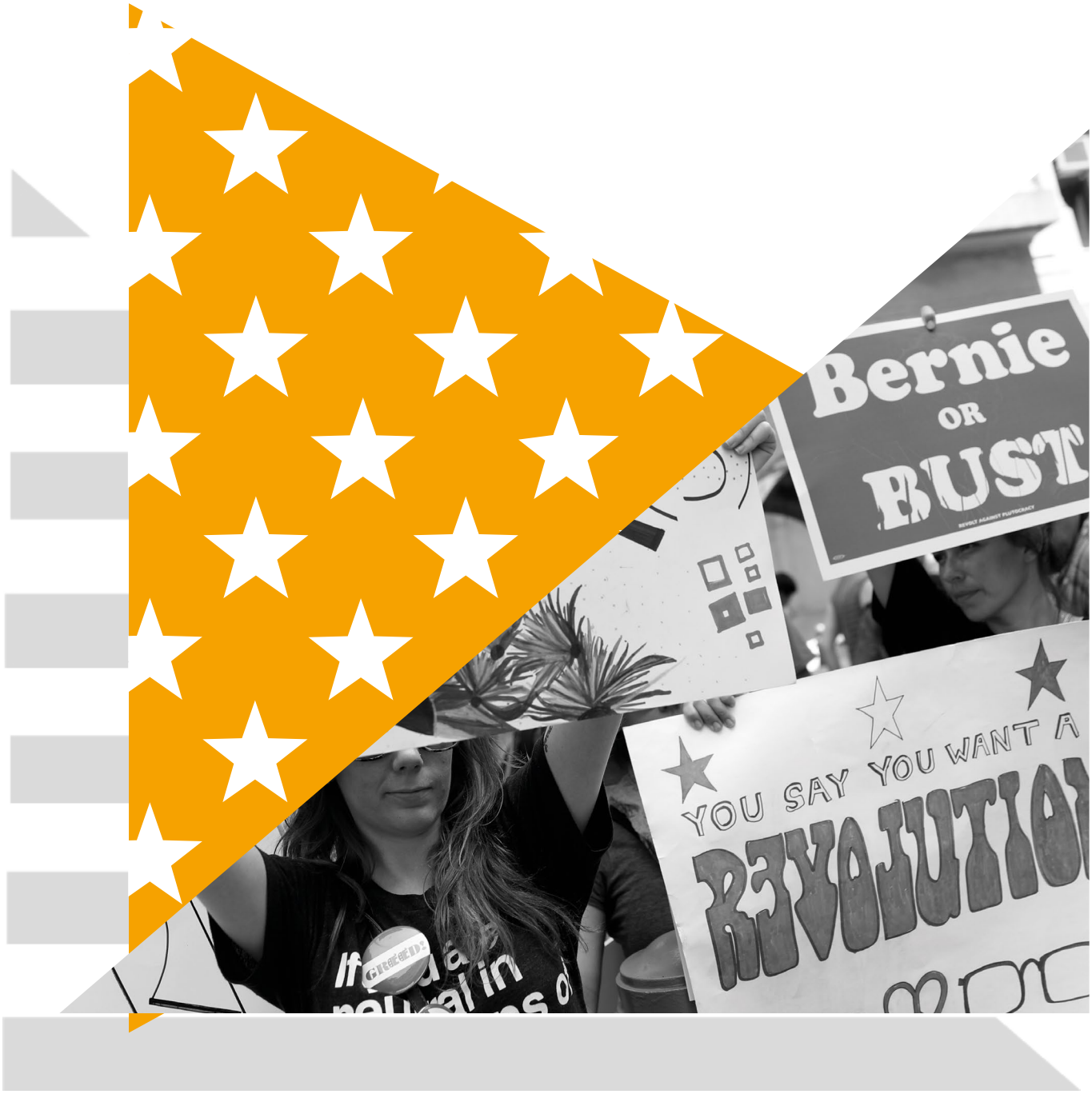

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Digital Campaign

Did Russia just hand Donald Trump the presidency?

Donald J. Trump is now the President-elect of the United States. Running on a platform of nationalist populism and anger at the status quo of the 'business as usual' politics of Washington, DC, the New York billionaire shocked the world by defeating Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton. Winning perhaps one of the most divisive elections in recent memory, Trump will now be leader of the free world. One question that remains is whether Russian cyber and information operations launched during the campaign were a deciding factor in the outcome of this election.

The US government has implicated the Russian government in being responsible for the hacks of the DNC, the DCCC, and the emails of Clinton's campaign chair John Podesta. Hacking groups such as Fancy Bear and Cozy Bear as well as individuals such as Guccifer 2.0 were named as the culprits, and these groups have known ties to the Kremlin. The information contained in these data breaches was subsequently dumped to WikiLeaks for public consumption. A retaliatory response to these information campaigns has been promised by the Obama Administration, but this has yet to manifest.

Russian President Vladimir Putin had good reason to prefer Trump over Clinton as president. Trump has entertained the idea of recognizing the Russian annexation of Crimea as legitimate, of weakening the bonds with NATO allies, and cooperating with Russia in Syria by withdrawing support for US-backed rebels. Clinton is an ardent supporter of the ousting of Russia-backed Syrian President Assad, has been outspoken about continuing economic sanctions against Russia for its actions in Ukraine, and has not ruled out more NATO expansion. From a Russian national interest perspective, Trump is the preferred candidate of Russia.

Returning to the question, did Russia just help elect their preferred candidate President of the United States? Such an accusation has huge implications for the integrity of the world's oldest democracy. But this claim is dubious when one reflects on the campaigns and public opinion of the last few months. Beginning with the DNC hacks that were released at the beginning of the Democratic National Convention in July, this information exposed by WikiLeaks showed that top party brass were biased toward Mrs. Clinton winning the nomination. Yet these leaks did not have an impact on public opinion; in fact, Clinton saw a post-convention bounce that lasted for weeks. The subsequent DCCC leaks also a demonstrated minimal impact on opinions of the Democratic nominee and her chances for winning the White House.

WikiLeaks 'October Surprise' came in the form of the hacked emails of the Clinton campaign CEO John Podesta. These emails showed the inner workings of the Clinton campaign, with no real change in public opinion until the bombshell announcement by FBI Director James Comey that he will reopen investigation into Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server during her tenure as Secretary of State. Her favorability dropped to a near tie with Donald Trump and never recovered up until election day. So, although Russian information campaigns on the American election is extremely troubling, it did not have a major impact on the result. What it did succeed in doing is sowing discontent and mistrust in American democratic institutions, an impact that cannot be measured accurately at this time.

It would also be unfair to blame the Hillary Clinton loss on the actions of FBI director James Comey. It is now apparent that most of the polls were wrong throughout the campaign, and that Donald Trump tapped into a populist sentiment that resonated with many rural white voters who have been politically sidelined by both parties for decades. Hillary Clinton's campaign was complacent and even cocky, thinking that it could win with the Obama coalition that propelled the current president to two terms by winning the coasts and the safe states of the upper Midwest. But Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin were taken for granted and went red. This was Clinton's deathblow. She was a victim of a flawed campaign and the electoral college system, and this is the second time this has happened to a Democratic candidate in 16 years where the latter wins the popular vote but not the federal system of state to state voting.

The United States and the world is now preparing for a President Trump; a man with no government experience who ran a divisive campaign built on anger. The effects of Russian cyber and information operations are negligible but troubling for future Western elections. The wave of anti-globalization is consuming the West. For good or bad, this is becoming the new normal.

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Taking Julian Assange seriously: considering WikiLeaks' role in the US presidential campaign

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In the final months of the US presidential campaign, Julian Assange returned to form, injecting into the election new questions about politics and politicians, and reigniting a discussion of WikiLeaks' particular brand of digital journalism.

At a time when attention was on what we hoped to know about Donald Trump – his tax releases, his income, his suitability for office – WikiLeaks presented us with a series of email releases about Clinton – from the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and campaign manager John Podesta – that instead posed new questions about Clinton in the late stages of a campaign that seemed increasingly heading for victory.

The first reaction was of conspiracy – targeting Clinton seemed anathema to the 'general consensus', such that it was. This risked a liberal order, where Trump represented a decline of Western democracy, and while fallible, Clinton could preserve such a world. Assange was seen as colluding with Russian hackers (casting doubt on the material), disrupting democratic norms (leading to a severing of his internet access while campaigns concluded), and of going after the wrong target (pining for as revelatory a release about Trump). This last accusation was made with such strength that WikiLeaks responded with its vision of journalism: "an open model of journalism that gatekeepers are uncomfortable with, but which is perfectly harmonious with the First Amendment."

To make sense of WikiLeaks in this context, however, requires understanding its dual mission: As journalism, and as a sharp critic of the same.

Since its emergence, WikiLeaks sought to irritate dominant notions of journalism, attacking mainstream journalism as complacent, while advocating that for the public which journalism should serve, WikiLeaks' approach was in their interest. We are also reminded in these disclosures that Assange's philosophy (as it can be discerned) has never fit 'left' versus 'right' ideologies easily, and rather is oriented sharply against the 'powerful'. As an editor, Assange expresses this through familiar journalistic ideals as a watchdog, and a strong commitment to the public. Hillary Clinton, first as Secretary of State and then as candidate, has been a symbol of the way power has been consolidated within a small circle of actors, and frequent subject of WikiLeaks' focus.

The late David Carr captured this well when he headlined a piece exploring WikiLeaks and compatriots in 2010 as "Journalists, Provocateurs, maybe both?". In its simplicity, this outlines the challenge WikiLeaks presents not only as a prominent voice in the news, but also as an organization that moves ably between journalistic and activist roles, with little consternation of whether that suits dominant persuasions of either.

This latest episode reminds us as well of the capability of digitally adept actors to be particularly disruptive when donning a journalistic mantle: an embarrassed Debbie Wasserman-Schultz stepped down from DNC leadership after emails showed she favored Clinton over Bernie Sanders, leaks in the Podesta 'tranche' revealed Democratic operative Donna Brazile sharing a debate question with the campaign, prompting her resignation as an analyst for CNN, and long the subject of speculation the Podesta emails also gave the public its first glimpse of Clinton's paid speeches to Wall Street (fittingly the focus was on maintaining 'private' and 'public' positions on policy, something made difficult by new journalistic actors like Julian Assange).

Finally, for understanding the challenges WikiLeaks presents to journalism, one has to see that the reaction to disregard their approach to journalism indicates a tendency to valorize certain traditions of journalism that dictate what is permissible– a 'good' way to do journalism based on traditional norms. Yet when we look at journalism's socio-functional roles (news and journalism shaping, informing, and challenging our understanding of society) we can find in WikiLeaks' work at least an embrace of these notions, even if it does so while irritating prominent visions of what journalism is or drifting towards conspiracy.

A week after the US elections, a photo was posted online at Gizmodo.com of a cat, wearing a necktie, parading around in a window of the Ecuadorian Embassy. This cat is just the sort of clichéd image we have come to expect traipsing across the internet, but for the seriousness of the cat's owner, Julian Assange, a man whose public persona exudes anything but frivolity, and whose embrace of digital technologies and media are anything but clichéd.

Dismissed in the headline as "bored and irrelevant, Julian Assange…", the tail end of the US campaign has shown that rather than irrelevant (though possibly still bored), Assange and his inclination to expose information continues to shape how we are able to view the world, and the way journalism is embraced by an increasingly vast set of actors working online. Irritating to some, uncomfortable to many, WikiLeaks' approach to sharing news and information has once again placed on center stage provocative questions about what it is to 'do' journalism in the 21st century.

Social media did not give us Donald Trump and it is not weakening democracy

During and after the 2016 US presidential election, a number of commentators in the media and scholars of political communication and journalism embraced the notion that the ascent of president-elect Donald Trump as the Republican nominee was, at least in significant part, the product of social media and media change more broadly. Even more broadly, commentators tell us that Trump was successful because the Internet has brought about a "post fact" or "post truth" era, and point to "filter bubbles" as a significant factor in his rise.

As illuminating as these accounts sometimes are, they fundamentally ignore larger historical, cultural, and institutional factors that have created the context for Trump's rise, especially the precipitous decline in citizen trust in government, professional journalism, and scientific expertise and the growing political importance of the white nationalist right in the United States. Attributing Donald Trump's electoral success exclusively, or even primarily, to media and technological change is to dangerously abstract from the conditions that made it possible, even as new technologies have undoubtedly proved tactically effective for the candidate.

It is worth remembering that there have long been various strains of conservative movements that have embraced an amalgam of paranoid conspiracy theories, denied the existence of basic facts, adopted an anti-institutions posture, distrusted expertise, and embraced the uncompromising, anti-pragmatic politics stance that many commentators and academics see in Trump's rise. In the 1950s, the historian Richard Hofstadter called this the "paranoid style of American politics," which was fueled by feelings of victimhood and nostalgia, the fear of political breakdown, status insecurity, and a persistent irrational fear of global conspiracy. The historian Lisa McGirr traces the history of the New Right since the 1960s among affluent and suburban Sun Belt men and women, who combined a religious emphasis on Protestant moral values with themes of anti-communism and small government, deregulation, and anti-union and public employee sentiment, all of which were driven by conspiracy theories propagated in right wing films, study groups, books, newsletters, and national media outlets.

Throughout this history, the Republican Party has been the institutional vehicle for these right wing movements, providing them with the infrastructure to engage in electoral politics and advance their policy aims. Political communication scholars have, ironically, not done a very good job studying ideas, favoring instead studies of their strategic presentation, what we call 'frames'. But it is precisely ideas of religious purity, small government, and racial difference that lie at the heart of the conservative identity that has defined the Republican Party for four decades, although the expression of these ideas takes various forms. Decades of conservative movement identity work, in our own time through conservative media infrastructure such as FOX news, has helped usher in the broad anti-institutional movement style of the right and the motivated reasoning that has shaped conservative views on everything from the denial of climate change to the distrust of legacy journalism. Meanwhile, the moral narratives of good hard working white Americans who are being taken advantage of by government bureaucrats, illegal immigrants, and the liberal elite on FOX News and in the rhetoric of the Republican Party's candidates that Arlie Russell Hochschild documents in her fieldwork on the Tea Party, and that fuels the resentment Katherine Cramer documents, laid the groundwork for the white identity politics behind Trump's run.

The internet did not bring about a 'post-fact' or 'post truth' era, nor did it bring about conspiracy theories, white nationalism, conservative identity and its farcical villains, and the distrust of institutionalized ways of producing knowledge, from journalism to science. Conservative movements since the post World War II era did, alongside its institutional vehicle, the Republican Party, and its media apparatus, from conservative radio talk shows to FOX News. The uptake of social media likely has given broader exposure to the particular mix of racial resentment, conservative identity, populist rhetoric, and economic anxiousness that marked the 2016 US presidential election and afforded it greater visibility, but it did not cause them. The emergence of outlets such as Brietbart, primarily distributed through Facebook, and Trump's Twitter rantings might have legitimated dispensing with the dog whistle in favor of a racial bullhorn, but the underlying idea that white Americans are under a unique threat from people of color, elites, and experts resonates with millions who have been told that for decades by members of the Republican Party. And, while social media might increase the speed of half-truths, rumors, and outright lies, it did not create the cynical public that does not understand, or care to, how knowledge producing institutions work. Conservative movements and the Republican Party did that too.

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Trump and the triumph of affective news when everyone is the media

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In 1961, the playwright Arthur Miller mused, "a good newspaper, I suppose, is a nation talking to itself." The assertion seems oddly quaint at a time when the US elected a president who was continually at odds with the press. Donald Trump intentionally positioned himself as an outsider of the established institutions of democratic deliberation. He bypassed the media to connect directly with his supporters, while simultaneously benefiting from the media to spread his message. Supporters and opponents became the media themselves, spreading and amplifying subjective and emotional affective news designed to provoke passion, not inform.

The triumph of Trump signals the contested nature of the media due to tectonic shifts in the mechanisms and pathways for news. The once privileged position of media organisations as the primary gatekeepers of news flows to the public has been undermined by the industry's economic woes, the emergence of digital information merchants, shifting audience practices and the spread of social media platforms. The ability to decide "all the news that's fit to print" is shared between traditional and new media outlets, activist groups, celebrities, citizens and computer code. News exists in a contested, chaotic and circular environment where emotion often overrides evidence, fuelling the rise of polarised, passionate and personalised streams of information.

As newsrooms across Middle America are hollowed out, most new digital media outlets are concentrated along the blue-tinged coasts of east and west. The result is a media that only sees a wide swathe of US voters from 35,000 feet. These voters did not see themselves reflected in the mainstream media and instead identified with Trump's outsider message of defiance. The loss of influence is even more apparent given the high number of newspapers that endorsed Hillary Clinton. Endorsements do not define the outcome but can help to build momentum behind a candidate.

The waning authority of newspapers is unsurprising given that no more than 3 per cent of Americans named local and national print outlets as the most helpful source for election news. News websites fared slightly better, cited by 13 per cent. Instead, cable news and social media emerged as the two 'most helpful' sources of election news. Arguably, they were also the worst.

Cable news is a misnomer. These networks are not in the business of evidence-based reporting. They are in the emotion business. And emotion sells. Ratcheting up anger and outrage on cable makes business sense. Trump's fiery and obnoxious rhetoric was a ratings bonanza, spurring a growth in viewership for the first time in three years and, with it, rising revenues. Viewers tune into the channel that mirrors their personal political leanings, as audiences gravitate towards media that reflects and reinforces their biases and beliefs.

Social media offers a space for voters to find, support and share facts, falsehoods or feelings. The impact of Facebook is staggering given that more than 40 per cent of Americans get their news from the social media behemoth. Facebook doesn't just bring together audiences for the news. It shapes the news for audiences, drawn from the choices of their social connections and regurgitated by algorithms to match personal preferences. It is a space deliberately designed to envelop users in the cosy embrace of the familiar, not challenge misinformed views or address unsubstantiated rumours.

Conspiracy theories about politics flourish on social media, where the currency is virality not truth. People will share false information if it fits their view of the world. Even if some don't quite believe it, they will share an article with the aim of entertaining, exciting or enraging friends and acquaintances. Fake news spreads so fast that potentially hundreds of thousands of people could have seen it by the time it gets debunked. Facebook was already criticised for failing to stem the rise of fake news before the election results came in, with even Barack Obama talking about a "dust cloud of nonsense."

When everyone can be the media, both left and right sought to be the media. Sometimes it was through the use of automated propaganda bots on Twitter. One study found bots were behind 50-55 per cent of Clinton's Twitter activity. That's nothing compared to the 80 per cent for Trump. Such frenzied tweeting is intended to create the impression of a groundswell of public opinion. At other times, it was engaged publics who took to social media to craft their own election narrative. For example, Clinton supporters appropriated the #nastywoman to show their support for a female candidate. Trump supporters took to #repeal19, the amendment that gave women the right to vote.

Such a media diet of affective news designed to stir up passions, feed prejudices and polarise publics is a far cry from the practices of institutional journalism. Reporting is kept separate from opinion and commentary. Facts are prized, with emotion finding its place in features, rather than the news. Looking back, facts never stood a chance. Beyond the weaknesses and failings of the news industry, in a smackdown between emotion and evidence, emotion always wins. Audiences swim in a media blend of tumbling facts, comment, experience and emotion, resulting in a news cocktail tailored to individual tastes.

Tweeting the election: Political journalists and a new privilege of bias?

Real-life developments are the lifeblood of journalism. Naturally, journalists are drawn to spaces where news events and stories unfold. Twitter was one of the US election's most popular social spaces for public and real-time analysis, commentary, and deliberation of two notoriously polarizing candidates (recall, for example, #TrumpTapes, and the Twitterstorm that followed the Washington Post's release of a 2005 video where Donald Trump boasts about sexually assaulting women).

Journalists' affiliation with legacy news media traditionally warranted their adherence to a set of institutionally defined values, procedures and practices, and many news organizations attempt to uphold these on social media platforms via institutional policies that encourage or even regulate engagement. Ahead of the election, digital native *Buzzfeed* and legacy media such as *The New York Times* and *Washington Post* sent out memos to their staff, which reminded them to refrain from bias on social media when covering the heated election. This already foreshadowed that some journalists' Twitter engagement during this time might not be as impartial and balanced.

Journalists who covered the election had to handle a striking and unprecedented amount of soft news topics. For example, an analysis by the *Columbia Journalism Review* found that this year's first presidential debate focused more on personality than any other in US history. For political journalism – one of the classic hard news genres with an undisputed focus on fact and analysis – this became uneven territory at times, as personal attributes, subjective experiences and character judgments took center stage and even turned into news stories themselves.

It was precisely these kinds of stories, the 'softer' ones, that encouraged many tweeting journalists to be snarky, witty and funny in their coverage. And tweets of this nature with high entertainment value (but low news value) happened to be those that did exceptionally well on the platform in terms of generating audience engagement and driving traffic – a very much desired outcome by both individual journalists as well as the news organizations they work for. To complicate matters for what we normatively understand as 'quality journalism', both of these (i.e. being funny on Twitter and followers liking it) clearly reinforced each other.

It was an election that stirred up many political sentiments in all corners of the country, including the news industry, where many candidate endorsements were unexpected or broke long-standing traditions of party support. Donald Trump quickly developed a reputation for picking fights with media outlets, blacklisted some of them (which was later reversed, but the overall message this sent was loud and clear), he publically attacked countless reporters, and made a name for himself as a bully on Twitter. Leading up to election day, USA Today reported a 'massive rise' in election-related hate speech on Twitter, much of which seemed directed at journalists. While Twitter has just started to address abuse on its platform, news organizations often don't provide support for journalists to manage negative experiences and attacks, as findings from my research suggest.

Twitter is often perceived as a repository of what's clever, and its culture as 'casual', so some reporters have found it difficult to bite their tongue. What came out was often emotionally charged, opinionated and biased to some degree or other. As I've argued before, this may not necessarily be to dish out revenge, but to blow off steam or out of a protective instinct for one's reputation and career.

We know of many past examples where journalists have gotten into trouble for saying something on Twitter they shouldn't have (leading to suspensions or even losing their jobs). While some reporters during this election have transgressed what their professional code (and quite possibly an institutional social media policy) outlines as acceptable professional behavior, we rarely heard of consequences. My research findings support this: the majority of journalists are aware that their engagement on Twitter also waves their employer's flag on it. Thus, news organizations tend to reap the benefits of journalists pro-active Twitter presence and allow the occasional degree of freedom a journalist may take, and reserve intervention only for when things go wrong.

Biased reporters on Twitter seemed to have gotten away with what was once a privilege reserved for opinion writers.

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The dissolution of news: selective exposure, filter bubbles, and the boundaries of journalism

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In the aftermath of Donald Trump's election as the 45th President of the United States, there is much soul-searching about the state of journalism: How could journalists have been so wrong? How and why did they misread the electorate? Is political journalism fundamentally broken, given how much of it is built around horse-race polling that was shown to be erroneous anyway? Did data journalism, so recently seen as a key part of journalism's digital future, fail us? As one exasperated observer put it: "So all the fact-checking of Trump's lies, all the investigative journalism about his failures, even the tapes—none of it meant anything." In short, what happened to news and its normative purpose in the political process?

Setting aside their relative merits for a moment, these critiques and others like them carry an implicit assumption: "news" still means more or less what we think it means. But is that really a safe assumption, anymore? In much of journalism studies, and in much of the metajournalistic discourse that occurs as pundits and audiences alike critique the press and its performance, the discussion often assumes that when we talk about news, we're all more or less talking about the same thing - that there's some kind of thingy-ness to recognizing news as news.

True, there have always been charges of media bias and manipulation, and lately no shortage of mistrust in the press much like other professions and institutions. Moreover, as we show in Boundaries of Journalism, determining what counts as journalism and who counts as a journalist is a perpetual struggle for definitional control. Nevertheless, news was assumed to be something everyone recognized, even if with a certain distaste for the product or disdain for its producers. You didn't have to like the news, but you recognized it when you saw it.

No single trend explains the dissolution of news. For example, consider what has happened to news from the perspective of Trump supporters in rural America. As Joshua Benton points out in Nieman Journalism Lab, newspapers that served as key community institutions have been hollowed out, much like the factories and church pews, and the print-to-digital shift has only accelerated the concentration of power to coastal news elites—the same elites who mostly responded to Trump and his ilk with snark and scorn, either explicitly on Twitter or implicitly in their framing of news coverage. Cable news and talk radio provide platforms for challenging the legitimacy of so-called "mainstream news" with incessant claims of liberal media bias while encouraging selective exposure among partisan lines.

More recently, social media make possible (cheap-to-make) fake news, the easy spreadability of misinformation, and the social and algorithmic orientations toward homophily. Together, those influences won the day (for example see this, this or this). Shared notions of "news" did not. Facebook especially, as Benton puts it, has "become a single point of failure for civic information… Some of it is driven by ideology, but a lot is driven purely by the economic incentive structure Facebook has created: The fake stuff, when it connects with a Facebook user's preconceived notions or sense of identity, spreads like wildfire." The central problem is that social media, rather than being a mere source of political information, is increasingly the structure for political discussion, as Phil Howard of the Oxford Internet Institute describes: "Social media platforms have provided a structure for spreading around fake news, we users tend to trust our friends and family, and we don't hold media technology firms accountable for degrading our public conversations."

What we ended up with was a filter bubble election. The decline of shared news, the echo chambers of partisan media, and the algorithms that serve confirmation biases coalesce in frightening ways for the future of the republic. Much of the post mortem criticism now being levelled at the news media assumes that basic terms like "news" have some shared understandings attached to them, some agreed-upon normative expectations for journalism in public life. We shouldn't be so sure anymore, and scholars need to figure out why.

This is also an ongoing issue, not a static one. It is clear that the forces of division in politics and in the media ecology reinforce each other in ways that portend greater cleavages for future elections. One way forward is to move beyond an interest in how information circulates across channels to attend more to what these messages are from a holistic viewpoint. No single laid-off newspaper reporter, talk-radio broadcast, or item in a social media newsfeed can explain the forces that are shaping how we think about journalism. It is only by looking across these outlets and their interconnections that we can hope to understand the media world that surrounds us.

Fighting the Red Feed and the Blue Feed

The discussion about filter bubbles has exploded after the 2016 US election. Evidence suggests voters access separate, ideologically homogenous, newsfeeds – the Red Feed and the Blue Feed as demonstrated by the Wall Street Journal. Therefore it is time to ask more questions about how algorithmic platforms such as Facebook and Google impact voters' information environment during elections. As we know from numerous Facebook press releases, Facebook strives to select the most relevant and engaging content to appear in the Newsfeed. But how should society deal with a 'relevant' newsfeed that turns into a filter bubble, often based on fake news?

Quality of information is particularly important during elections campaigns, when the electorate should make informed choices about candidates and policies. Obviously social media did not give us Donald Trump, as argued by Daniel Kreiss - larger historical, cultural factors have given ground for Trump's presidency: such as frustration, polarisation and mistrust in elites and institutions. But I will still argue it is worthwhile to discuss the quality of information voters interact with in the decision-making process and how information is selected and presented. Thus, fake news and Facebook's algorithm is relevant in this context.

An increasing number of citizens are using social media to follow the election campaign and inform themselves about the candidates. In 2016, 62% of Americans got some news via social media, up from 49% in 2012 according to a Pew survey. Facebook is in this context the most used platform, in addition to Reddit and Twitter. 44 percent of US adults and two thirds of Americans aged 18 to 29 claimed to have used social media in an ordinary week in order to learn more about the 2016 presidential election.

It is still too early to tell how *strong* the filter bubble has been for voters in this election, but *Wall Street Journal's* website Blue Feed and Red Feed gives us a pretty good idea of the sharp contrast between the two information streams.

The most relevant and engaging newsfeed might be wonderful for users and consumers, but concerning for scholars of democracy. If the information environment becomes so polarized and fragmented, it allows voters to live in different realities –the so-called balkanization of the public sphere. It gets even more problematic when fake news is added into the filter bubble. Fake news got heavy circulation online during the run-up to the election, and Facebook's algorithm allowed the misinformation to be amplified and disseminated widely.

Filter bubbles are often understood as personal ecosystem of information that has been catered by algorithms, such as Google or Facebook. This way, the users are presented with information that confirms and strengthens their own cultural or ideological bubbles. Even though the term filter bubble got its digital definition from Pariser, we have had analogue filter bubbles that skews or limits our views, but historically, they have been related to our news consumption, education, social network, or geography, to mention a few of our social filter bubbles. There has always been too much information in the world for us to grasp, comprehend and register, so we have filtered and excluded information based on our needs. Before the internet, editorial media helped us sort and prioritize information and news. After the internet became mainstream, algorithms became useful tools to sort and present information, either it was related to which book to buy, which movie to see, which song to listen to, or which news story to read.

Facebook's role in selecting and calculating the most "relevant" information has ramifications that are also political. The debate about whether Facebook is a media or a technology company got intensified earlier this fall. The Norwegian newspaper Aftenposten protested Facebook's censorship of the Napalm girl picture, arguing that Facebook made editorial decisions interfering with the free press. As Facebook increasingly becomes the information source for people around the world, the company has a unique responsibility in striving for information diversity and quality. In addition to "relevant" and "engaging", "serendipity" should be built into the newsfeed. The Red Feed and the Blue Feed reinforces old filter bubbles from the party press era. Do we want filter bubbles to be reflections of the party press that we got rid of decades ago in liberal democracies? If Facebook is not able to diversify and fact-check the newsfeed, the most popular social network might end up with an algorithmic driven newsfeed based on fake party propaganda.

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Two tribes go to vote: symbolism on election day

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Typically private thoughts underpinning voter choices are hidden within the black boxes of human psychology. One might assume how choices are arrived at through statistical analysis of available data. However such analyses cannot capture how emotions and feelings inform specific choices.

In the digital age some make feelings public. This piece is based on observations of the use of social media, and in particular Instagram, to show how symbolism, through the interaction between visuals and text offers meaning to the act of voting and voter choice making.

Tweets and posts to social media accounts from the queues outside the polling stations offer such insights. The political meet the mundane in the tweet "waiting to vote Trump, hungry for change, hungry for a big mac" one of many similar contributions which show how voting and the election impinge on but fit within broader life experience. However Instagram offers a different set of affordances. Here we can see how symbolism is used to show a shared identity about how on 8th November in the US two tribes went to vote.

Tribe Trump

Trump supporters' text reflected the very broad and very mundane aspects of their candidate's campaign. Making America great, some adding 'again' was repeated a lot as a broad call to arms. Issue politics of the everyday were also referenced; protecting jobs… from immigrants, the Chinese, and a variety of outside threats. Taking the country back, from bankers, corrupt politicians, Muslims, immigrants, was also a theme; where politicians were mentioned as the 'other' the slogan 'drain the swamp' was invoked.

But of more interest was how pictures were used to accompany these. Sometimes it was simply 'Old Glory', the flag as the ultimate symbol of nationalism which accompanied an act of patriotism. If voting was motivated by a desire to make America great, the flag tended to feature. Other contributors used more humorous pictures. Someone took a picture of a sink plunger and accompanied this with the text 'off to vote Trump to unblock our system'. Others had more sinister overtones. A picture of a cache of arms, one hopes to have been a stock Google image, accompanied the text 'voting Trump to exterminate immigrants'. Such ideas, with one picture of a queue of black Americans accompanied by 'why I'm voting Trump' showed that while not every Trump voter was racist, most racists voted Trump. Where the voters showed themselves or others as the 'in tribe', they tended to by white, middle aged or older, casually or very informally dressed and holding or wearing symbols of the nation.

Tribe Clinton

Clinton supporters overtly showed a more middle class image, those who showed themselves tended to be female and this was symbolically invoked as the motivation for voting. A 30 something, well dressed lady with two daughters is pictured saying, 'We are making history for the women of America'. This theme was frequently replicated across various states. Even in Alaska, one of the safest Republican states, a woman showed herself in the act of voting to say 'let's make history, put a woman in the White House'. Few policy initiatives were invoked; the symbolism reflected the shared gender of candidate and voters.

A more diverse bunch told their followers they were voting Clinton to block Trump. One man is pictured holding his nose accompanied by the comment 'an anti-Trump Clinton voter'. Whether her image, gender or scandal-mired campaign drove this antipathy is not expressed, rather pictures of queues, feet in a line, or voting booths accompanied the phrases 'voting' and 'anyone but Trump'. There seemed less positive reasons motivating those that voted Clinton beyond a small but highly motivated group of women who wanted a female president.

Othering

The tribes did not simply use pictures of themselves. Images of Ku Klux Klansmen, 'Bubba' the stereotypical redneck, even Wile E. Coyote was pictured as a typical Trump voter. While some Trump supporters showed pictures of Black American and Hispanic voters to suggest the racial significance of their vote, others offered a more anti-establishment perspective. One queue, featuring mostly men and women dressed in work clothes, including dungarees with one man in a suit in the middle accompanied the text: 'spot the Clinton voter'. Here we saw the tribes self-identify through the act of othering; defining what they are not in order to claim a shared identity.

Tribal Politics

Instagram was used by a range of citizens, all voted, some were fervent supporters, some just wanted to be part of the moment and make a statement. The tribes demonstrated points of connection with their chosen candidate and made identity references. Trump's supporters showed diversity along issue lines. Some wanted job security, others white supremacy with connections and convergences along a long continuum. Clinton supporters made gender the issue, others physically or symbolically held their nose to try block Trump. In turning their experiences into an image they made voting a symbolic act, capturing their innermost feelings as they took part in this most historic of contests.

Ideas are for sharing

The Twitter technology for sharing is retweeting. You find a tweet or a url referencing something on the web that you think is interesting or important, and you tell Twitter to retweet it. Twitter then sends it to all of your followers, to people with whom you are sharing thoughts. It is important to us as observers to know what was being shared and how widely it was shared. What is the reach of this sharing?

Tweets were collected from the streaming API with the search terms 'Clinton' and 'Trump'. The number of tweets per day was in the hundreds of thousands for each candidate. Twitter does not share all tweets through the streaming API so this analysis is based on a subset of the total tweets about Clinton and Trump.

Twitter has given public voice to millions of people concerned about politics, and one result is widespread attention to ideas that find the right place and the right time. In the day before and the day of the election one tweet was spread very widely through retweeting.

RT @whytruy: vote hillary clinton idc if she a liar yall boyfriends lie to yall everyday and yall still fw them so gone head and vote for her

According to Twitter It was retweeted more than 40 thousand times. It was posted to Twitter by whytruy who is a person of color, as the saying goes, and who goes by the name *Not Pinkett Smith*. She joined Twitter in 2014, has tweeted 7,413 times, and has 15 followers. It is written with the kind of abbreviations that are frequently used in tweets to make the 140 character limit. It is a reason for voting for Hillary Clinton that obviously made sense to the community to which it was addressed. Twitter gives the followers of every person who retweeted this message, and their followers equal more than 24 million Twitter users. One young woman was able to reach a very large audience.

How much retweeting was going on in the final days of the campaign? It was 60% of all messages in this collection. For example, tweets mentioning Trump rose from six hundred thousand to nine hundred thousand, and 60% of those messages were retweets. Not many had the reach of *Not Pinkett Smith's* tweet, but the stream of tweets about the campaign was largely sharing ideas.

What was being retweeted?

This analysis is based on looking at the top ten retweets for each candidate each day giving 300 retweets to look at. Almost all could be characterized as either favoring Clinton or Trump and they could be classified as about character or what the candidate would do if elected.

The most striking feature of these retweets was the extent to which it was a campaign about character. Eight were about what a candidate would do if elected. The rest were about character. That is consistent with news media reports about the campaign that were heavily about character -- lying Hillary and misogynist Trump -- as examples. The retweets were more one-sided than had been the number of tweets. There were 1.4 times as many tweets mentioning Trump as mentioning Clinton. And there were more than two times as many retweets among the top ten favoring Trump compared to retweets favoring Clinton. Almost universally the retweets were reasons to oppose the opponent. The only good news for a candidate was the many reasons people could think of for opposing the opponent. A large share of the negative retweets about Clinton were based on Wikileaks. The organization had a very large collection of hacked emails and tweets, and they used them to challenge the character of Clinton. Four and a half retweets a day challenging Clinton were retweets of Wikileak tweets.

And then: November 9, and 10, and 11, and 12 saw a turnaround. There were ten favorable retweets about Clinton, then 17, and 16, and finally 15 favorable retweets. The total for Clinton was 58 and the total for Trump was 10. A major shift in the balance. And a major shift in what was being expressed. Almost all of the retweets mentioning Clinton were about finding a way to save us from Trump as president. On the tenth a call for signing a petition was the most frequent retweet.

Ask the Electoral College to save us. It was retweeted 18,593 times, and the call spread widely. The count of the followers of the unique individuals posting the tweet numbered 50,703,306. And the next day it was repeated 14,817 times, and the next day 20,851 times.

Retweeting is about sharing ideas, and this campaign saw sharing being practiced quite broadly.

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In the age of social media, voters still need journalists

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The American public got more of their news from social media than during any prior presidential election, according to a new Pew study. With 75% of Americans online, and of those, over 70% on Facebook, the public found news and talk about the 2016 presidential campaign in their Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram accounts. As my research suggests, political campaigns like social media because it allows them to talk directly to the public, bypassing journalists, whom they always distrust and dislike.

The question is: what kind of information does the public get directly from the campaigns?

In an ideal world, the presidential campaigns would provide the electorate the opportunity to reflect on the issues that face the country. They would learn the candidate's policy positions and vision for how to tackle those problems, and evaluate the candidate's character and attributes as they auditioned to be one of the most powerful leaders in the world.

My research team and I analyzed Donald Trump, the Republican nominee, and Hillary Clinton, the Democratic nominee, and how they used social media during two phases of the campaign season.

The first stage ran from October 2015 through January 2016, when the candidates began to introduce themselves and their positions to the public. We call this the surfacing stage. We then looked at the primaries stage from February through June 2016. We did this analysis as part of the Illuminating 2016 Project, analyzing all of the presidential candidates' social media messages on Facebook and Twitter through the entirety of their campaigns.

We use computational approaches to analyze the messages. This requires creating categories to describe the messages, having people read and tag a sample of the messages, and then using software that looks for patterns in the messages that share the same category. The software then generates algorithms for what to look for in the messages so as to assign them to the proper category.

Our algorithms are generally more accurate than people. For the categories we focus on, the algorithm is accurate around 75% of the time.

Our analysis suggests that the public did not get the information they need to make a good voting decision. We still need journalists to push candidates to answer the hard questions and provide the public with a deeper understanding of candidate views and character because the candidates won't necessarily provide that themselves.

Trump Less Likely to Talk Issues Online

There are stark differences in the ways Clinton and Trump used social media to strategically construct their vision for the country.

Clinton produced almost three times as many messages as Trump about the policy issues.

Indeed, the main Democrat candidates for the were more likely to post messages on policy and issue matters than the most popular Republican candidates. This is true if they are posting messages that articulate their own policy positions or attack others' policy positions.

The style of Trump's posts on the issues is distinct when compared with Clinton. Where she routinely provided reasons and facts for her positions, Trump offered broad generalizations or generic claims with little evidence. Take for example, these posts from Clinton on Twitter. By comparison, Trump's positions were declared rather than reasoned. Additionally, he often retweeted messages from supporters instead of articulating his personal stance on issues.

Trump Is Not Consistently Negative

Political pundits and campaign watchers declared Trump to be profoundly negative. Some have predicted this was one of the most negative campaigns in history. But when you look in aggregate rather than anecdotally at each candidate's individual social media posts, you get a different picture.

During the surfacing stage, when the candidates need to introduce themselves to the public, Trump advocated for himself more frequently than did Clinton on social media, and he attacked more, but not disproportionately so. When looking at the primaries, though, a noteworthy change occurs. Clinton attacks more than Trump on Twitter, at nearly twice the rate. It's not until May that Trump goes on the attack – primarily against Clinton. This coincides with Trump becoming the presumptive nominee for the Republicans. Once he starts to attack Clinton, he stays on the attack.

When you look at the substance of the attacks, there are noteworthy distinctions. Trump's attacks are often personal. In February, for example, Trump primarily attacks Bush, but Rubio and Cruz are not spared

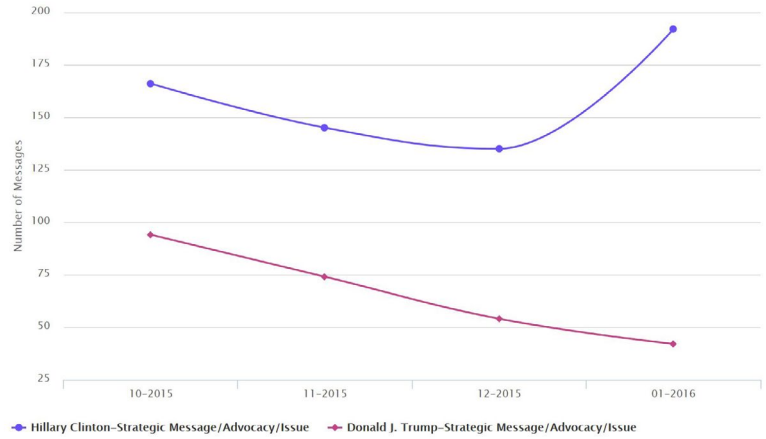
Yet, while Trump provides only thin policy claims, he is not constantly on the attack, unlike the public perception of his Twitter stream. Indeed, Clinton tends to be more negative than Trump on social media.

We Still Need Journalists to Rigorously Cover Campaigns and the Public to Read Those Accounts

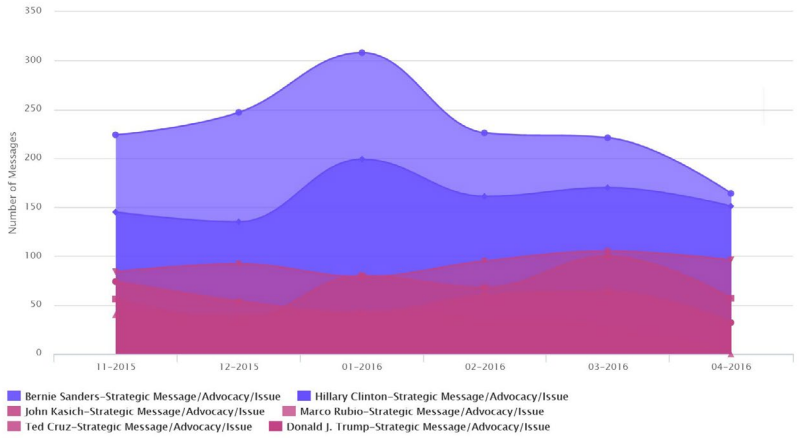
With the public increasingly getting information directly from the candidates themselves on social media, what they get is of limited breadth and depth to make effective judgments about who is the best candidate to lead the country.

Our democracy still needs journalists to cover campaigns, ask the candidates challenging questions, and hold candidates to account for their claims and actions. And the public needs to take the time to seek out quality journalism about the campaign. Candidates, on their own, tend to focus on their image and character and provide a rosy portrayal of their policy positions. But, that's not enough to make a good decision for whom to vote.

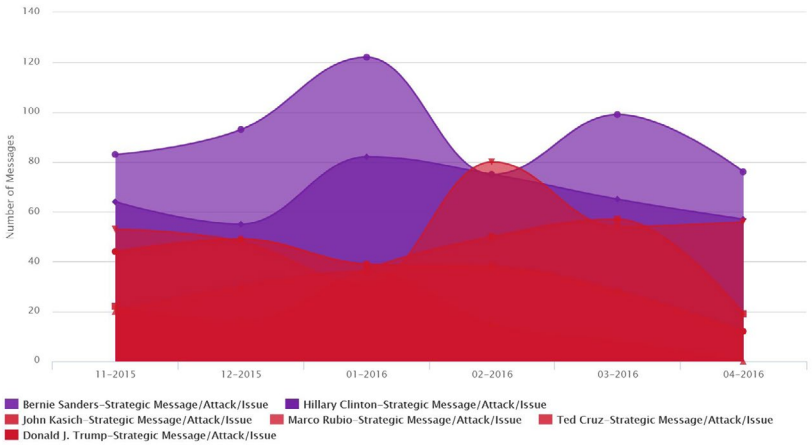
Hillary Clinton,Donald J. Trump / Strategic Message/Advocacy/Issue



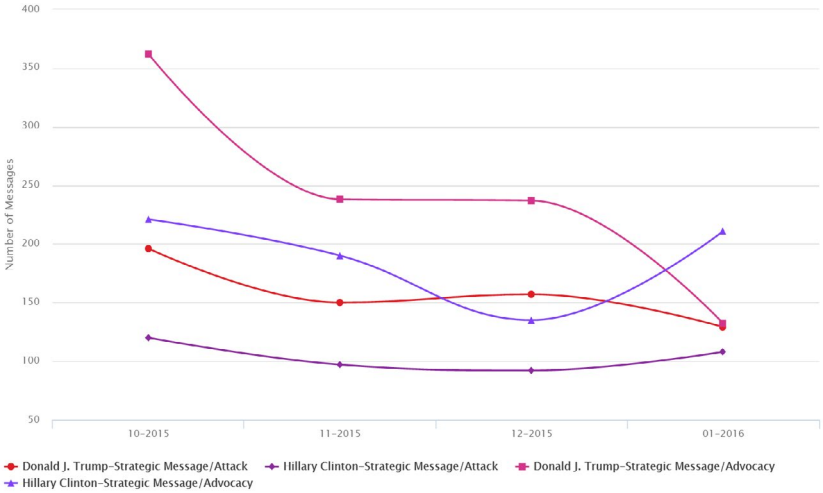
Bernie Sanders,Hillary Clinton,John Kasich,Marco Rubio,Ted Cruz,Donald J. Trump / Strategic Message/Advocacy/Issue



Bernie Sanders,Hillary Clinton,John Kasich,Marco Rubio,Ted Cruz,Donald J. Trump / Strategic Message/Attack/Issue



Donald J. Trump,Hillary Clinton / Strategic Message/Attack,Strategic Message/Advocacy



Dark magic: The memes that made Donald Trump's victory

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Move aside 2012, the 2016 US Presidential election was the *real* meme election. Since the primary season kicked off, the American people have lent their time, attention, and Twitter hashtags to vernacular play with Little Marco, Ted Cruz the Zodiac Killer (or blobfish, or sweaty, sad phone banker), and the disposable camera snapping sweater prodigy known as Ken Bone. Don't see any of your favorites? Try this A-Z guide.

But it wasn't all fun and games. Alongside more lighthearted play were memes premised on broader identity politics. Progressives proudly reclaimed Donald Trump's accusations that many undocumented immigrants are "bad hombres" and Hillary Clinton is a "nasty woman." Conservatives, for their part, proudly reclaimed Clinton's assertion that racist, misogynist, and xenophobic Trump supporters were "deplorables."

On the furthest end of the conservative spectrum, white nationalists operating under the banner of the so-called alt-right were especially prolific. Participants hijacking Pepe the Frog, for example, managed to catapult its maybe ironic, maybe sincere bigotry to mass attention, prompting months of journalistic coverage (and prompting us to declare the motives behind racist Pepe memes were irrelevant).

Alt-right icon, Breitbart editor, and exiled Twitter hate vessel Milo Yiannopoulos has called this "meme magic," arguing the alt-right's "shitpost" machine is so influential it is able to directly influence the process in favor of their "God Emperor" Trump, whose unapologetic bigotry the alt-right embraced and helped perpetuate.

Despite the alt-right's gleeful self-congratulation, however, 2016's "meme magic" conjured very little wholly new. If 2016 was the meme election, it's not because of alt-right shitposts or even Trump himself. Rather, it's because Trump tapped into prejudices bigger and older than the internet: hateful racial stereotypes, oppressive gender norms, sweeping anti-elitism, and good old fashioned fear of the other. By tugging at these strings, Trump ran a campaign whose platform consisted not of policy proposals or thoughtful argumentation, but almost entirely of memes.

The term *meme* in this sense, as described by Milner, doesn't merely label internet play. Online or off, memes emerge when resonant ideas spread within and across social collectives. Factual, objective truth isn't a requisite if underlying idea connects and compels sharing.

Through savvy appropriation of supporters' existing anxieties and biases, Trump exploited this process, invoking the following resonant memes:

- Many Mexicans are murderers and rapists, (so we need to "build the wall")
- Muslims pose a threat to national security and should be barred entry (until we can "figure out what is going on" with them)
- Crime is rising in "inner cities" full of dangerous, violent people (read "black people" and "poor people")
- There's unchecked voter fraud (especially in those "inner cities," and so you have to watch, and by watch "you know what I'm talking about, right?")
- The federal government is full of corrupt failures (and Trump will "drain the swamp")
- "Career politicians" are untrustworthy (contrasted with Trump who "tells it like it is" and "says what he thinks")
- "Crooked Hillary" Clinton is a criminal (so we should "lock her up")
- Women are emotional slaves to their biology (especially when a woman has "blood coming out of her...wherever")
- Women who get abortions are waging a war against future generations (and therefore "should be punished")
- Women are sexual objects ("grab them by the pussy," the President-Elect suggests)
- America needs to return to its glorious roots (i.e. that we can "Make America Great Again" by going back to a time of much narrower political and social enfranchisement)

These ideas are memetic; each resonates independent of factual realities, to the point of *countering* factual realities. Why these memes resonated with Trump's supporters is, like the motivations behind the alt-right's "meme magic," opaque. Maybe they agreed ("he says what we're thinking"). Maybe they cherry-picked the memes that resonated most, while downplaying others (in order to "drain the swamp" you have to deal with a little "locker room banter"). Maybe they just couldn't stand the thought of electing...that woman… (a meme itself). Maybe they were willing to burn down the house because one leg of the table wobbles (that'll really "shake things up").

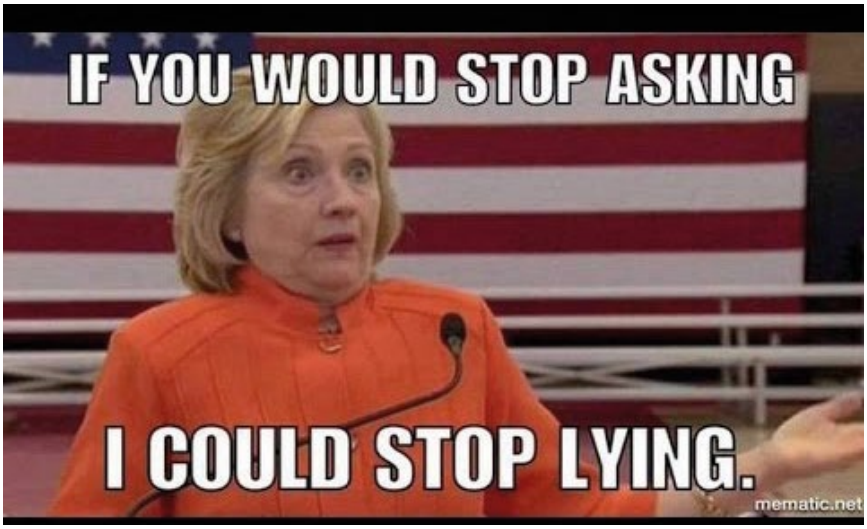
What Trump himself thinks about the memes he propagates is unimportant. What matters is the impact these memes have. The most fundamental impact is they normalize hate and denigration to the point hate speech is no longer seen as hate speech. It just becomes *speech*, whatever Trump happened to tweet that day was later reported by journalists as an expected part of the news cycle.

The second, more visceral, impact is the power of these memes to undermine the basic sense of safety, worthiness, and political visibility of those populations--women, Mexican Americans, Muslim Americans, Black Americans, Americans with disabilities, the list goes on--that have been targeted by the memes Trump and his supporters circulate.

And these memes will continue to work their dark magic, so long as they resonate with enough people willing to embrace--or conveniently ignore--their very real, embodied consequences.

THAT FACE YOU MAKE
WHEN YOU'RE A BULLY AND JUST GOT BEAT UP BY A GIRL
OCCUPY DEMOCRATS

TRUMP IS GOING TO BUILD
A "WALL"
memegenerator.net


IF YOU WOULD STOP ASKING
I COULD STOP LYING.
mematic.net

DEPORT THE ILLEGALS
buzzlie
EVERY. LAST. JUAN.

7

Pop Culture and Populism

Donald Trump, reality TV, and the political power of parasocial relationships

Donald Trump is the first person in American history to win the presidency without first serving in government in some capacity. Much has been written about how a real estate developer and reality TV personality could pull off such an unusual feat. The accomplishment is especially extraordinary given how many controversial statements Trump made during the campaign, which many commentators said would have doomed any other candidate. The executives and producers of Trump's NBC TV show, which ran weekly for more than a decade, argue that "The Apprentice" made his candidacy possible because it consistently portrayed Trump as a successful businessman who was tough but fair.

There also is a psychological aspect to Trump's portrayal in "The Apprentice" that is worth exploring: the concept of parasocial interaction, which is the illusion of intimacy that people sometimes have with celebrities and politicians (Giles, 2002; Thorson & Rodgers, 2006).

In a parasocial relationship, viewers feel a special attachment to TV personalities and other media figures they watch regularly. Viewers often see TV personalities as close friends whom they know really well, even though they have never met. During its 11-year run with Trump as the star, "The Apprentice" and spinoff "The Celebrity Apprentice" attracted as many as 20 million viewers an episode. That's a lot of potential friends.

The strength of the pseudo-friendship in a parasocial relationship can cause viewers to discount any negative things they hear that contradict what they feel they know about the TV personality. It's analogous to being friends with a colleague at work for 11 years and hearing them say only fair-minded things, until one day they make a seemingly bigoted or sexist comment. You may give the colleague the benefit of the doubt because the 11-year relationship created the impression that you know the colleague's "real" thoughts and feelings, which are different from their recent negative comments. A similar phenomenon may be at work with Trump supporters who were regular viewers of "The Apprentice," which ran from 2004 to 2015. The reality show's portrayal of Trump was different from his news coverage during the campaign. Trump was not shown on "The Apprentice" making controversial statements. He was depicted as steady and reasonable, whereas news coverage during 2015-16 highlighted his provocative remarks about Mexicans, women, Muslims, and other groups and individuals. Trump supporters with a longstanding parasocial relationship based on years of exposure to "The Apprentice" may have discounted incendiary remarks by the candidate because it did not fit with the "real" Trump they thought they knew from reality TV.

The case for explaining much of Trump's support in terms of parasocial interaction is especially strong because parasocial relationships happen the most among those who also fit the demographic profile of Trump supporters.

Research indicates that parasocial interaction is at its highest among the poorly educated and those heavily dependent on TV, of which the elderly make up the largest segment (Levy, 1979; Auter & Palmgreen, 2000; Robinson, 1989). Polling data suggest Trump found his greatest support among those with a high school diploma or less, as well as those ages 65 and over. In addition, parasocial interaction is most pronounced with TV personalities who are shown as themselves, such as newscasters, as opposed to playing fictional roles, such as characters in dramas or comedies (Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985). "The Apprentice" portrayed Trump as himself. Finally, parasocial interaction is high when a TV personality's portrayal is consistent over many years. As mentioned before, "The Apprentice" spent more than a decade displaying the most favorable attributes of Trump.

Parasocial interaction, of course, is not the only factor that helped Trump politically. Many supporters undoubtedly identified with his positions on key issues. However, it is interesting to note that on most major issues in 2016, such as building a wall along the Mexican border, surveys of self-identified Trump voters found that they were less likely to support Trump's political views than self-identified Hillary Clinton supporters were to support her positions. As a result, it appears that long-term perceptions of Trump the man, which were crafted by reality TV, contributed greatly to propelling him to the White House.

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New roles in the presidential campaign: candidates as talk show comedians

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A popular instrument in political marketing is the attempt of candidates to "humanize themselves", in order to appeal to a larger audience. In recent decades talk-shows have been one of the best ways to make that possible and present politicians in a more human, approachable light. Baum (2005) even talks about how presidential candidates are "talking the vote" by "hitting the talk show circuit". What started off in a tentative way with Bill Clinton playing the saxophone in *The Arsenio Hall Show* in 1992 has nowadays become the norm: politicians showing off their hidden talents, playful and joking side to gain the sympathy (and votes) of broader segments of the electorate.

But the way presidential candidates "hit the talk show circuit" in 2016 possibly created a new trend for future campaigns: it's not about talking the vote, it's about playing the vote. Trump and Clinton changed the rules of the campaign game and almost became comedians during their talk show appearances, passing from the role of interviewee to one of a performer whose purpose is to entertain the audience.

Both had a very intense media presence, but their attempt to appeal to a broader segment of population (those seeking entertainment and not political information) by appearing more human, adopting a "one of us" image and proving their sense of humor, "forced" them to become comedians who act in short sketches: attacking or impersonating the opponent, making fun of his statements or physical aspects, talking about their own policies proposals in a simplistic way, and ultimately being able to make fun of themselves. Let's just consider the presence of the two candidates in one of the most popular entertainment talkshows: *The Tonight Show*.

Hillary Clinton appears on *The Tonight Show* in September 2015 in a sketch where she "played" herself having a phone conversation with a fake Donald Trump (played by Fallon). As the fake Trump interviews her, she has a chance to talk about issues on her agenda, but also make fun of her opponent's hair, treat him like a true character, sipping on a glass of wine while pretending to listen to him and rolling her eyes. She's being more than approachable and funny when she laughs about Trumps' fake hair and asks Fallon to prove hers is real: "Did he ever let you touch his hair? Go ahead, touch mine!"

In January 2016 she appeared again on Fallon's show and talked about her assets as a future president in a "Mock Job interview for President". The host of the talk-show becomes a political commentator and interviewer (Jones 2005). When asked about her opponent, she tells that the campaign is going to be "quite a show-down" (and she guessed it well). On September 2016, she has a humorous moment in the same show under the title of "Kid letters with Hillary Clinton" where Fallon reads her letters received from kids.

But that is not her best performance. She "makes her first steps" into an acting career in a Saturday Night's Live sketch, where she plays the role of a bartender who mocks Trump whilst having a funny dialogue and singing with a "fake" Hillary, played by Kate McKinnon.

Trump on the other hand, had fewer appearances and was not that "extreme". He tried to show his human, cool, friendly and humorous side, but not with the same magnitude. He had three appearances in *The Tonight Show*. First was the one in September 2015 where he "interviews himself in the mirror" and allows the moderator to impersonate and imitate him. In January 2016 he appeared again on the show, taking the "mock interview for President" and making jokes about his looks.

In September 2016 he takes another "mock interview" to talk about latest campaign events and answer questions. He does perhaps the gesture no one expects and allows Fallon to mess his hair (though he does not seem comfortable).

Despite that both had fairly equal time and number of appearances in The Tonight Show, there is an obvious difference between the two candidates: one (Clinton) does manage to "humanize" herself and shape her message and speech in accordance with the type of show, while Trump tried the same strategy without much success. The evident thing is that both "hit the talk show circuit" (both have been present in almost all the main entertainment shows) as a campaign strategy to present themselves in a whole new light in front of potential voters who tune in for an hour of entertainment; and they do that from a new position: the politician who can turn himself into an actor/comedian to win the hearts (aka votes) of his audience.

Farage's Trump card: Constructing political persona and social media campaigning

Three days after the election, *The Telegraph* declared Nigel Farage would be Britain's "unofficial ambassador" to the Trump administration, suggesting the former UKIP leader would have greater political visibility and potential power than few could have imagined just two years ago.

The Sun's former editor Stig Abell describes Farage as the most successful British politician of the last 30 years (Twitter, November 9, 2016). His focused approach - particularly in terms of using social media to further his core message - has helped achieve some of the greatest political upsets of the 21st Century.

Farage and UKIP's influence on Trump's social media campaign should not be overlooked. Trump, of course, had a long established self-brand as a celebrity entrepreneur. However, his social media campaign also built on Farage's methods during the 2015 election to develop a new, political persona.

UKIP's campaign used the increased visibility of the short campaign period as a first step towards achieving Brexit the following year, centred on Farage as the voice of the "UK" or "Britain", often directly in opposition to the "EU" and "immigration". This self-narrative had at its core a distrust of establishment institutions – particularly political parties and the BBC – viewed as the enemy of him, an "everyday British bloke", longing to escape globalised multi-cultural society. This narrative went on to underpin the "Vote Leave" campaign approach for the EU Referendum the following year.

The connections between this and Trump's "self-brand" during the presidential campaign are, of course, easily identifiable. They both harnessed the power of digital communication within the contemporary cultural conditions of promotionalism. They used techniques of "digital dog-whistling", nationalistic and anti-immigrant discourse linked to a central pledge that they will "Make Britain/America Great Again".

For Farage, this approach resonated with Facebook audiences particularly. His page 'likes' during the 2015 short campaign were almost triple those of David Cameron and the number of people talking about him on the site was often more than all of other smaller party leaders combined.

Similarly, throughout the American Presidential Campaign, success in terms of reach, share, likes and follows was evident on Donald Trump's Facebook and Twitter pages. He regularly achieved 40 times as many retweets and shares than Hillary Clinton for social media posts on the same day.

The way public figures use social media to construct personas for a strategic aim is a growing area of academic study and its implications for political communication and culture are significant.

P. David Marshall, who recently launched the *Persona Studies* journal, argues that a new cultural politics has emerged through *presentational* media –presentation of the self in digital space –which is quite different to that supported by traditional *representational* media, such as journalism, TV and film. Studying persona is categorized as the exploration of intentional presentation of specific identities with purpose.

This approach offers insights into how Trump and Farage's social media campaigns helped them achieve their political aims. Digital and personalised storytelling techniques and representational media construction patterns are re-shaped, offering ever-new models of persona construction for strategic gain.

Farage and Trump are the first in British and US politics to have fully harnessed the power of persona creation on SNS as a deliberate political communication tool. They use both SNS and mainstream media to build a persona created specifically to enable public consumption of their political message. Using individualism and self-promotion, they generate what Alison Hearn (2013: 27) in relation to reality TV stars, has described as "rhetorically persuasive packaging" and a "promotional skin" through which they can embody both the discontent of members of the electorate and ideas of alternative.

Trump and Farage's personas colonize the lived experience of their followers and encourage them to actively display their mutuality of stance on SNS in order to perpetuate message. It is a new kind of political labour; highly stylized and mediatized self-construction, aimed at drawing the audience around a central bonfire and then directing them to specific action - first online and then in the voting booth.

In this world, the political party is of decreasing significance and success can be far better judged by clicks, shares and likes than by opinion polls. Analytics mean successful messages are repeated and while this new electioneering is still of course often group activity –also performed by campaign managers and social media teams - at its core it is a personalised "Me" "You" and "Us" conversation. This approach enables campaign teams to produce content that allows instant identification rather than prolonged thought, communicating easily within the scroll of a social media timeline.

Farage and Trump's approaches to political persona construction reflect its increased significance across both digital and mainstream media and particularly how it has reshaped celebrity culture. But that's not to say we should see this as an entirely new phenomena without any historical basis.

Considering how the far-right have successfully used developing media forms, nationalistic rhetoric and celebrity promotionalism in the past, means we may better understand the significance of mediatised persona construction to political communication. Through this we can begin to conceptualise this latest surge in populist politics, its societal implications and how its techniques may be channelled towards a different course.

Bethany Usher's article 'You, Me and Us: Constructing Political Persona During the 2015 UK General Election Short Campaign' is published in a special 'Political Persona' edition of Persona Studies later this month.

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Does Twitter humanize a politician's campaign?

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Twitter has become one of the leading social media platforms and has become a key way for politicians to communicate with journalists and the public. President Obama joined Twitter fairly late (2015) compared to other key political figures, David Cameron joined in 2012, Hillary joined in 2012 and unsurprisingly Trump has the oldest Twitter account out of these as he joined in 2009 which is due to his long term fame as a celebrity with his business ventures as well as his show The Apprentice.

This presidential campaign has seen a rise in the importance of social media for campaigns, in particular allowing the campaign to communicate with supporters, both in a 'good' way and a 'negative' way. Trump has always been controversial and his Twitter communication is no exception. In a way it can be argued this style of communication humanizes the political campaign as we all laugh at things about people we dislike. Sharing jokes (see opposite) with friends is a popular use of social media, and this is exactly what Trump did except he shared the joke with the public and all his supporters which makes him feel slightly more grounded (even though his ego is as close to the ground as the moon). However, the tweet can also be viewed as a negative for the campaign as this came from not just a politician but someone who could be President. Therefore while the tweet is grounded and humanizing, it can also be judged as highly unprofessional. This behaviour has caused concerns as what Trump might tweet or retweet jokes about foreign countries which as a person is acceptable but not when that person is the representative of the United States. In this context jokes can cause conflicts, damage trade for the US or worse.

Another way that the Twitter use can humanize a politician's campaign is how they can respond to both scandals about themselves and about their opponent in real time as well as being able to have debates on Twitter that we might not otherwise see. Opposite is one example of a feud Clinton and Trump had on Twitter which showed how politicians (especially in this campaign) can appear to act like children in a playground arguing about whose dad is bigger or who should get to play with a toy first. In this instance it showed how not having the best responses can lead to you getting humiliated by your rival as Hillary suffered at the hands of Trump.

A further issue that can arise from politician's Twitter pages are that tweets are often seen as scripted by a PR team which is unsurprising, we see it with most celebrities when they post tweets which lack a human dimension and appear as purely promotional or public relations. This is further demonstrated by Hilary's opening tweet which refers to her in the third person, not usually the way someone would talk about themselves on twitter. This can make a politician's Twitter feel staged or robotic which is not what social media is supposed to be about, it should be about individuality. This can be seen by Hilary's poor comeback that we can see in the figure and Trump points out how it is obvious Hillary is not the one posting most of the tweets on her page, making her appear even less like one of the people whose votes she is seeking.

The more human a politician is seen the better as you feel like they will say what they mean and not just what their PR team tell them to say. When a politician makes a speech, personal experience adds another dimension to it making it more human and relatable. Kruikemeier's research shows that a more personalized style can be a vote winner, whereas self-promoting in the third person can turn voters away.

It seems that social media has become another area for spin doctors and PR teams to communication on behalf of politicians. Professional communication consultants thus become a middleman for the politician, interacting between them and their supporters and the public. It almost feels like another barrier between citizen and politician, as politicians embrace new forms of media they run the risk of becoming less human and more like puppets controlled by their PR teams.

The other side of the question asked is whether a politician's use of social media could be seen as too human, with the politician commenting on every small issue and trying to become keyboard warriors which is not what we expect from our leaders. Our perception of leaders is that they need to be human but not too 'ordinary' as they should be intelligent communicators. Too much emphasis on using social media could be seen as immature when they should be focusing their time studying the key issues and making informed decisions instead of reposting petitions on social media or making jokes about those who they disagree with. Thus 'correct' use of such platforms is tricky, and politicians have to be careful when deciding when or when not to tweet.

Donald J. Trump
@realDonaldTrump

"@mplefty67: If Hillary Clinton can't satisfy her husband what makes her think she can satisfy America?" @realDonaldTrump #2016president"

4/16/15, 8:22 PM

Hillary Clinton
@HillaryClinton

Follow

"She's got the courage, the compassion, and the heart to get the job done."

Watch President Obama endorse Hillary.

Donald J. Trump
@realDonaldTrump

Follow

Obama just endorsed Crooked Hillary. He wants four more years of Obama—but nobody else does!

Donald J. Trump
@realDonaldTrump

Follow

How long did it take your staff of 823 people to think that up--and where are your 33,000 emails that you deleted?

Hillary Clinton
@HillaryClinton

Follow

Delete your account.

"TrumpDASHIAN" – the US election as an extension of The Apprentice?

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The US election has been dubbed the nastiest election in recent US history with both candidates' attacking each other at any opportunity. But this does not seems too different to other elections of the past, mud slinging has always been a big part of the US debates. However, you would be forgiven in thinking you are watching another amusing boardroom firing session, as Trump's behaviour can be likened to that of an Apprentice contestant, not a US presidential candidate.

Donald Trump, host of "Apprentice", his brash, masculine and dominant persona suits the reality TV show genre. We've grown to accept these larger than life characters that are "just being honest" and "real". Reality TV shows are great to watch, a guilty pleasure perhaps, but the outcomes are of no consequence to us as citizens. But this is the US presidential election, the contest to become leader of the free world with an unsurmountable level of responsibility. This surely should not be performed ina similar way to a reality TV show format, but a decision based on well thought through policies and political experience.

Trump says he prides himself on being "honest, real, the anti-politician" – sound familiar. Donald Trump's style seems more akin to Kim Kardashian, than the qualities required for a world leader. He doesn't have the qualifications or experience for a higher office, his plan and proposed policies are lacking in substance and most likely won't see the light of the day. Instead, he is offering to American people an "Apprentice" style show, this special brand of positives (everything Donald Trump) against all of the negatives that he sees in both the current president,the Obama-care policy and the "weak economy" and his immediate opponent Hilary Clinton.

In the Apprentice we see candidates competing with each other to demonstrate they possess the qualities required to be a great businessman or woman or the best business leadership skills, although this can come across as excessive or childlike. Candidates regularly bicker and attack each other's personal and professional persona in the board room. We see this channelled throughout the primaries with him shooting down other candidates one by one. Now using the same tactics in the election, we see him try to dominate and intimidate his opponent with his very aggressive approach, with humiliation added to the mix. He seems to have forgotten that he has a duty to offer the American people facts and well thought out policies. Rather Trump seems happy to offend almost everyone, African- Americans, Mexicans (with his big great Trump wall), woman, Muslims- calling for a complete Muslim ban , Latinos, President Obama, and soldiers.

Recent interviews with Jimmy Kimmel and then Jimmy Fallon contain Donald Trumps' monolog about his successful businesses, himself and of course all things beautiful. The presidential candidate never misses an opportunity to remind us how much he achieved in the business world and how he can use this knowledge and experience to make America great again! He is reorienting the qualifications required for US President. It is much easier for the American people to relate to business success than political success, such as Hilary achievements as Sectary of State, as often most things go on behind closed doors. So it may seem plausible that a successful business man could make America great again!

Unlike other candidates who use these shows to improve their rapport with the general public and repair or improve a damaged image, Trump uses these to appear more human. However, Trump seems to do the opposite, reinforcing his reality TV like character an extreme version of a human with extreme views! For instance, when asked about ISIS Donald states that *"we should go after their families, wives and children, mothers and sisters"*. He doesn't seem to care that he is publicly suggesting committing war crimes leaving CNN anchor speechless on live TV. It may have appeal, but it lacks the measured approach one might expect of a president.

However, he still has supporters and people seem to relate to him. Is this the power of the all too familiar genre of reality TV style helping to secure the vote of voters that have never voted? He seems familiar, real and honest which is juxtaposed against the secretive and in Trump's words "corrupt" politician Hilary Clinton. But simultaneously, he is actually alienating large groups of people, inciting fear and spreading hate. But this behaviour is so familiar to us on reality TV, that maybe the audience are desensitised to it, but if this were to become normalised it could be dangerous for democracy. Whether you're a Democrat, Republican, or a fan of reality TV you surely couldn't believe Trump is qualified for this monumental responsibility?

What is Trump?

We have been deluged with coverage of Donald Trump and his campaign. There are the seemingly endless articles on his pronouncements and his behaviour; each story expressing barely suppressed disbelief that such a person is running for the office of President. And then there are the other pieces, in which reporters earnestly pursue Trump's voters – the left-behinds of the mid-West and elsewhere, who, despairing of a political system that has failed them, turn to 'the Donald' as a saviour who 'speaks their language'.

But hidden within this coverage is another theme, one that has received less attention, but which runs through both types of story. This is not about who Trump is and who his supporters are, but *what* he is. It is a truth almost universally recognised that he is not a 'politician', either because he fails to meet the standards expected of a democratic representative or because he expresses no desire to be such a figure. But if he is not a politician what is he? What role is he playing?

This question stems, in part, from the notion that the contest for the presidency is not an exercise in straightforward political competition. As the writer George Saunders observed: "American Presidential campaigns are not about ideas; they are about the selection of a hero to embody the prevailing national ethos."

But this begs a further question, if the aim is to be a 'hero', what kind of hero are we talking about? Mark Singer, in his book *Trump & Me*, twice quotes a Trump associate as saying: "Deep down, he [Trump] wants to be Madonna". Quite what of Madonna's many incarnations they have in mind is unclear, but Trump as rock or pop star is a theme taken up by other writers. Jonathan Freedland in the Guardian described finding himself at a Trump rally, in the "standing area directly in front of the stage, a kind of Trumpian moshpit …"

Bob Lefsetz took the analogy one step further in a piece entitled "Trump is a Heavy Metal Band": "Yes, Donald Trump is a rock star, if you go back to what that once upon a time meant, someone who adhered to his own vision living a rich and famous lifestyle who cared not a whit what others said." And for Lefsetz, it is the genre that holds the key to Trump's ability to command an audience: "Metal… Sold out arenas when no one was watching. Ain't that America, where despite garnering dollars the establishment shies away from that which it believes is unseemly. And the reason metal triumphed was because it was the other, it channelled the audience's anger, it was for all those closed out of the mainstream, and it turns out there's plenty of them."

The music writer Simon Reynolds also sees Trump in the guise of a rock star. Not, though, that of heavy metal, but of glam rock: "Trump surrounds himself with glitz. Trump and the glam rockers share an obsession with fame and a ruthless drive to conquer and devour the world's attention."

For other commentators, the rock star comparison is swapped for the more traditional ideas of showbusiness. The *New Yorker* compares the democratic contest to "a long-running Broadway musical" and Freedland talks of Trump rallies as 'sheer showbiz'. James Poniewozik of the *New York Times* sees Trump in terms of TV formats: "his tale has remained a kind of '80s prime-time soap of aspiration and ego. …. [H]e cited his TV ratings the way another candidate might boast of balancing a state budget. Mr Trump's primary win was like having a niche hit on cable. …. In programming terms, his campaign is nostalgia based content – that thing you used to like, I'm gonna bring it back again! He's a classic TV show rebooted for Netflix: that old stuff from back in the day, but edgier and uncensored."

And, of course, Donald Trump *is* a reality television star. His role on *The Apprentice* is key to understanding his ability to play the role of presidential candidate. As David Von Drehle wrote in *Time*: "the craftier characters of reality TV experience a different kind of stardom from the TV and movie idols of the past. Fans are encouraged to feel that they know these people, not as fictional characters but as flesh and blood."

In research that colleagues and I conducted we found that young people in the UK saw figures like Alan Sugar and Simon Cowell as credible political leaders. They were seen as tough and decisive, attributes that were seen necessary to effective political leadership. And other political scientists have noted the rise of 'superstar political celebrities' in the era of 'anti-politics'.

It might be said that the analogies on which commentators draw are just that – analogies; no more than a literary device. But equally it might be that the role of the politician is indeed becoming that of the rock star. And the answer to the question 'what is Trump' is that he is indeed 'a politician' after all.

A version of this piece was also published by The Conversation

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Out of touch, out of ideas? The American presidency in film and television

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The election of Donald Trump as the President of the United States has been interpreted as evidence of a backlash against globalisation and the unfair distribution of its fruits, and an indulgence of the perception that the metropolitan elite (in collusion with big business) have stolen the American Dream and rigged the political system and the economy in their favour. The establishment are viewed as 'out-of-touch' with the concerns of ordinary people. I have been researching and writing about the fictional presidency in film and television since Barack Obama took office in 2009. I have observed its development and evolution since the early 1990s, from a desire for a return of the Reaganite, militaristic strongman during Clinton's presidency, to the hope for an intelligent and sober leader to replace George W. Bush in the 2000s.

The most recent examples in film and television have positioned the President within archetypes previously unimaginable in this particular cultural repository: in *Olympus Has Fallen* (2013) and *White House Down* (2013), the President is recast as the 'damsel-in-distress', requiring rescue from dastardly terrorists by the heroic, musclebound white male. In *Scandal* and *House of Cards*, the institution is shown as rather weak; unable to bend the world to its will any longer, it is dependent upon underhand tactics, corruption and criminal behaviour in order to achieve anything. In *House of Cards*, President Frank Underwood (Kevin Spacey), assailed from all sides by his opponents, resorts to grotesque levels of manipulation and corruption to keep his place in the White House. In *Scandal*, President Thomas Fitzgerald Grant III ponders abandoning his position for love; he only ever pursued the position to best his father. Popular television appears to be suggesting that the presidency is a feeble and irrelevant institution, incapable of standing on its own.

Designated Survivor, which premiered this autumn, appears to represent something of a resurgence for the notion of the President as 'strongman'. President Thomas Kirkman (Kiefer Sutherland) is installed to the nation's highest office after the Capitol Building is blown up during the State of the Union Address. Previously the Secretary for Housing and Development, he is entirely inexperienced and unprepared for the role. Kirkman proceeds cautiously, and refuses to bow to the more aggressive forces within the military. Unlike Sutherland's iconic character Jack Bauer *24*, Kirkman is reasonable, measured and careful in his execution of power. He will protect the nation, but he will not do so at the expense of liberal values.

If all this sounds hilariously out-of-step with what the United States has just inflicted upon itself and the world, that's because it is. Kirkman is a 'normal' leader; safe, stable, even boring. He is an intellectual (something of which he is slightly embarrassed, it seems, when he discovers that his secret service codename before becoming President was 'Glasses'). He responds calmly to chaos, he enforces the rule of law and refuses to allow the country to become consumed by fear, intolerance and hatred. In reality, America's Electoral College system has delivered a President who has been swept to the White House by inciting these unpleasant emotions. The equation has been flipped on its head: in my book, I argued that presidents in film and television tend to indulge the populist fantasies that we *know* (or, rather, *knew*) could not be enacted in reality. Films from *Mr Smith Goes to Washington* to *Dave* give us the idealised image of the non-politician wielding political power; *Independence Day* and *Air Force One* posit the notion that the great President is one who rides into battle himself to face down the nation's enemies. Until now, it always seemed to me that the fictional presidency provided a release valve to our dissatisfaction with the real candidates for President, and a safe revolt against the bargaining and compromises necessary when in power.

So while contemporary film and television have explored the notion that the presidency cannot have it all its own way in a more diffuse and complex global environment, it seems the electorate have rejected such hard truths. Trump's promise to 'Make America Great Again' was seductive enough for the groups of people to whom he appealed that he was able to win the White House on the basis that the President can change the way America, and the world, is run. He was elected on a fiction. While the President in film and television now might appear 'out-of-touch' with contemporary politics, we should continue to monitor its development as a critique of the institution. If Donald Trump wants a primer of what is expected of him now he is President, he could do worse to look to the sobriety and moderation of *Designated Survivor* for guidance. That said, I'm not holding my breath.

It's never just a joke: Pop culture and the US presidency

As an icebreaker, I ask students taking my course on American comedy and humour, "Who is the funniest person in the United States?" In July last year, the droll first response was "Donald Trump." He was not the answer in July this year.

What changed? Obviously, the stakes were different. He was a few swing states away from the US presidency, something impossible to conceive of last year, something impossible to countenance up until Election Day, and the reality for at least the next four years.

The polling and the predictions did not bear out. "When you realize," wrote the cultural historian, Robert Darnton, in The Great Cat Massacre, "that you are not getting something—a joke, a proverb, a ceremony—that is particularly meaningful to the natives, you can see where to grasp a foreign system of meaning in order to unravel it." Perhaps we must look beyond big data and a STEM-oriented production of knowledge to understand Trump's win. A proposition: the US presidential campaign is pop culture.

It definitely has *a* culture. Anything that lasts for so long must, especially if so many are watching – even more so if those watching include a continuous news cycle that increasingly incorporates netizen journalism and social media.

Trump used this culture more successfully than Clinton because he forced the campaign to become, almost wholly, pop culture: that is, the domain of mass entertainment consumed, distributed, and created according to shifting and entrenched tastes.

Cultural theorist Stuart Hall wrote that popular culture "is the arena of consent and resistance. It is partly where hegemony arises, and where it is secured." For example, "Build the Wall!" is the barest immigration policy. It is, however, when coupled with a demonization of out-groups (Mexicans, Muslims), a provocative cold open to an outrageous act that catches on, spread by word of actual and virtual mouth, a slogan that can stand for everything from hateful xenophobia to evidence of Washington's failure to economic anxiety under global capitalism.

Like old-school comedians, Trump takes control of the room by physically dominating the stage and hectoring the audience into submission. Much like many male, establishment comedians in the wake of the furore around Daniel Tosh's rape joke, supporters defended his right to say whatever he wants to get a laugh (that is, a vote), praising his outsider fearlessness in a politically correct and politically corrupt America. His chauvinistic and racist comments reek of many things—including the authenticity so prized, contemporarily, of tell-it-like-it-is comics (Jon Stewart, Amy Schumer, Louis CK).

The media reported Trump's act, and mildly held it to account. But his supporters and proxies spun and blustered and obfuscated, so that the reports are just part of the scene, like drinks being served in a comedy club – they only fuel the response and spread the punchlines.

Clinton was reduced to an insistent heckler. Hecklers never look good. They ruin the act. They bum everybody out: "Sit down and shut up and let him get on with the show."

Clinton cannot "win" at pop culture. She admitted as much at her Democratic National Convention speech: "I get it that some people just don't know what to make of me." Uncertainty is disturbing, and it allowed Trump and his supporters to make something of her for themselves.

Her contrived attempts to reach young people ("More like Chillary, Am I right?") were instantly lampooned for their inauthenticity. According to a Gallup Poll tracking July 11-Sept 18, the words Americans mentioned hearing most in relation to Clinton were "email" followed by "lie," "health," "speech," "scandal" and "foundation." For Trump, "the top substantive words Americans use when reporting on Trump include 'speech,' 'president,' 'immigration,' 'Mexico,' 'convention,' 'campaign' and 'Obama.'" These were Trump's punchlines, and they prevailed.

Further, Clinton is a staple target of pop culture: a woman. Her length of time in public life notwithstanding, no male political candidate has been given the scrutiny over dress, demeanour, health, intimate relations, and age that Clinton receives.

And even when Trump received acute scrutiny, it worked for his outsiderness and authenticity. The tape of Trump bragging about groping women revealed nothing new other than the existence of the tape. Everyone, including the people that voted for him, knows that he is like this. Many men, both inside and outside locker rooms, are also like this, especially men in power (such as disgraced Fox News heavyweight and Trump adviser Roger Ailes). It's part of the arena of consent and resistance of pop culture. It is power, and the election of Trump suggests that his performance of this kind of power is aspirational.

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8

Result and Beyond

Trump and the populist earthquake in American politics

Election night in America has been stunning. The outcome may be catastrophic and transformative for America and the world. The pundits and pollsters consistently reported throughout the long, long US campaign that Hillary Clinton was consistently in the lead in the popular vote estimated across the average of most national polls. The projection of a Clinton victory had seemed widely plausible. By all accounts the Democrats had a unified convention, a well-funded campaign, an experienced, well qualified and knowledgeable candidate, the overwhelming endorsement of the mainstream press, the support of a team of heavy-hitters including POTUS and FLOTUS, a popular President, a low economic misery index, a well-organized get out the vote ground game, and a consistently winning debate performance.

By contrast, the Republican leadership has been deeply divided with lukewarm support for their own standard-bearer. Donald Trump offered himself as a candidate emphasizing a toxic brew of racist, ill-informed, misogynist, nationalistic and vulgar rhetoric, offending women, Hispanics, and many minorities, with only a loose association with the truth, no substantive detailed policy platform, no experience of government or the military, less funds than his opponent, and minimal advertising and polling. And yet, still the Republicans ended up holding both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue.

What explains the populist earthquake in American politics?

Some factors are clearly specific to this election campaign. The way that the Republican primaries turned into a circular firing squad for the moderate candidates. The lack of effective new blood competing in the Democratic contests, allowing all the bag and baggage of the Clinton haters to be reignited. Events such as the Russian-hacking of the DNC and the Wikileaks endless recycling of the Clinton email story. And so on.

But the populist earthquake is also part of a far broader picture.

Like Donald Trump, leaders such as Marine Le Pen, Norbert Hoffer, Nigel Farage, and Geert Wilders are prominent today in many countries, altering established patterns of party competition in contemporary Western societies. These parties have gained votes and seats in many countries, and entered government coalitions in eleven Western democracies, including in Austria, Italy and Switzerland. Across Europe, their average share of the vote in national and European parliamentary elections has more than doubled since the 1960s, from around 5.1% to 13.2%, at the expense of center parties. During the same era, their share of seats has tripled, from 3.8% to 12.8%. Even in countries without many elected populist representatives, these parties can still exert tremendous 'blackmail' pressure on mainstream parties, public discourse, and the policy agenda, as is illustrated by UKIP's role in catalyzing the British exit from the European Union, with massive consequences.

The electoral fortunes of populist parties are open to multiple explanations which can be grouped into accounts focused upon (1) the demand-side of public opinion, (2) the supply-side of party strategies, and (3) constitutional arrangements governing the rules of the electoral game.

Applying these explanations to the Trump phenomenon, the demand side concerns the cultural backlash concentrated among older white men who want to 'Make America Great Again', meaning a vision of an older small-town America, reflecting traditional values common decades ago over more progressive, cosmopolitan and multicultural values. The supply-side concerns how parties compete and the way that the Tea Party wing of the Republican party advocated and laid the foundation for many of the populist themes which Trump subsequently echoed, including anti-establishment and anti-government, birtherism, climate change denial, and know-nothingness. The institutional context concerns the weakness of party control over the selection process and the path that provides for an outsider candidacy.

But the explanation of the populist revolution is less important than the consequences of a President Trump. This is not just the choice of another leader like any other, where there are genuine party differences on public policies and debate about alternative ways to manage the country. The authoritarian tendencies of his leadership, his attack on basic democratic principles, and the isolationist withdrawal of America from the world, are likely to be deeply damaging, to human rights at home and abroad. Brexit was a disaster for Britain – and Europe. But it was just a seismic tremor presaging a far bigger tsunami. President Trump will be a catastrophe for America and the world.

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Democracy Trumped

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How did brand magnate reality TV star with a vindictive style and no political experience become President of the United States? A few years back I asked a colleague in Italy to explain Berlusconi. He pointed to a corrupted and dysfunctional political system that angered voters enough to throw a bomb into government. Never mind that Trump, like Berlusconi, oozes a special corruption all his own. Most of the press and party elites missed the scale of angry emotion aimed at them by white working and middle class Americans. Indeed, the cosmopolitan press had long rendered these folk nearly invisible, brushing off the early warning signs of the Tea Party as a minor disturbance. And so, most media experts and party insiders engaged in knowing discussions of how impossible it would be for anyone to be elected with Trump's combination of inexperience, shady business dealings, and inability to manage his emotions and stay on script.

Meanwhile, Trump found and fed the white anger with simple, emotional messages, such as the promise to "drain the swamp" in Washington. He branded "Crooked Hillary" as the ultimate insider, with close ties to the banks, a trail of (largely manufactured) scandals, and argued it was difficult drawing a line between official business, the Clinton Foundation, and her ties to Wall Street. Despite the baggage that Clinton carried through the campaign, she did win the popular vote, and might have won the election had the (Republican) FBI director not renewed an investigation of her handling of official emails as Secretary of State. This was the "October surprise" that sent many undecided voters, including a majority of white women, to Trump.

Clinton tried in vain to get policy messages into the news, but Trump dominated the daily media spectacle with tirades against immigrants, government corruption, establishment politicians from both parties, the press, and the global economy. When he mentioned Clinton, the crowds ritualistically chanted "lock her up," which he promised to do. Reporters were herded like cattle into fenced pens at rallies, and crowds shook their fists and chanted at them when Trump denounced the lying, biased media. Reporters needed Secret Service protection at these events. Through his deft use of social and conventional media and relentless appearances at rallies, Trump created a movement that revealed, like Bernie Sanders in the Democratic primaries that selected Clinton, the emptiness of the US party system.

The Trump revolt echoes the rise of the radical right sweeping European democracies. Traditional parties have become "hollowed out," in Peter Mair's term, uninterested in engaging voters beyond crude marketing campaigns at election time. The British felt this shock with the Brexit vote, and no fewer than 28 countries in Europe have radical right parties on the rise, or already in power and threatening basic democratic values. Even though the radical left is as numerous and angry as the right, it is burdened with identity politics and the romance of deliberative democracy, which undermines conventional party organization, leadership, and the capacity to generate appealing ideas that travel via simple emotional messages.

The spectre haunting democracy today is the legacy of centrist neoliberal elites, and the press organizations that cover them. The core democratic institutions of press and politics have failed to engage white working class populations that have been economic casualties of globalization. Perhaps even more troubling is the failure of the center left and right to engage white middle classes who are more the symbolic casualties of globalization. These are the god fearing Christians for whom racial and patriarchal privilege once offered social identity and status, and who now feel threatened by multiculturalism, immigration and Islam. Yet, neoliberal politicians from Tony Blair to Barack Obama have told them that globalization is irreversible, so get over it.

Clinton's message of "stronger together" surely felt wrong to those who lived in Trump's America and wanted to make their nation great again - in their own image. Beyond the 'lying' mainstream press, which Trump helped his followers deconstruct every day, Trump's coded messages of resurgent white nationalism circulated through the alternative or "Alt" right media system in the US. Among hundreds of Alt right websites is *Breitbart*, with19 million unique monthly visitors. Late in the summer, when struggling with self-inflicted damage in the establishment press, Trump picked Breitbart publisher Steve Bannon to head his campaign. The campaign media team was soon joined by Roger Ailes, who began his political career reinventing Richard Nixon for the television age, and later headed Rupert Murdoch's Fox News channel until he was driven out by a sexual harassment scandal. Bannon and Ailes have visions of consolidating their victory by forging a Trump media network that will serve as a surrogate party organization, and bypass the mainstream press in keeping Trump propaganda flowing to supporters.

In light of these trends, it is time to ask: What is the future of democracy given the imbalance between left and right, and the disdain shown by many victorious right politicians for civil liberties, moral tolerance, racial, sexual, and religious diversity, press freedom, and basic civility? Those of us who benefit from cosmopolitan societies and global economies have failed to notice that the democratic institutions of press and parties have withered, while a new and more ominous political and communication order has emerged in our midst.

The narcissistic capture of American nationalism

A striking feature of the 2016 Presidential election was the strength of the simplistic delusionality which the successful candidate offered, and which appeared to be so warming for so many people. 'Donald will put the mines back.' 'Donald will build a wall.' 'Donald will make America great again.'

Of course, the call of simplistic and delusional rhetoric is hardly a new phenomenon. Even in his serious pursuit of conspiracy theories, Trump stands in a long political tradition, that of the 'paranoid style', as the historian Richard Hofstadter called it in 1964. But there is a case for seeing in 2016 a new level of obliviousness to both moral principle and to reality-testing.

At one level, Trump's appeal is because he is a populist and nationalist. Populism is usually a divisive force, but is not always as toxic as Trumpism threatens to be. Nationalism is an empty container, which can be filled with many different kinds of politics, and different kinds of emotion. To understand the surge of Trumpist nationalism, we need to analyse it psychologically as well as politically.

An American historian who wrote with scholarly eloquence about American politics was Christopher Lasch, author in 1979 of *The Culture of Narcissism*. While a lot of hostile commentary on Trumpism has used the term 'narcissist' to refer to the man himself, there has been less examination of how the basis of his appeal to American voters lies in his reflection of their own ideological narcissism.

To be clear, narcissism in the technical sense is not a spontaneous arrogance or selfishness, a self-love which some people just happen to have and others don't. As Lasch described, it takes many behavioural forms, some of which are very different from the popular image of the preening narcissist. Essentially it is an internal state of mind, a delusional inflation of the self which is a defence against anxiety, against unconscious fears of weakness and abandonment. Believe in your own invulnerability, and you will be fine. Given the vulnerability and dependency of the human infant, the tendency to fall into narcissistic fantasy is something we all have to work through in emotional development, and which situations of insecurity in adult life may re-evoke. In a world that seems dangerous, a narcissistically-based belief in your own powers to transcend reality can smother anxiety.

The defensive narcissism of Trump the person is clearly on view, in a form consistent with the popular view of how a narcissist behaves. The absurd braggadocio would be hard to sustain, even as a deliberate performance, by someone not bunkered in an experience of their own majesty. Precisely what fear and insecurity lies beneath, we can only guess. More pressing, and more do-able, is the task of understanding why this toxic defence is so plausible and welcome across the American electorate.

American nationalism has probably always had a strong element of narcissistic grandiosity, even when American power in the world meant that its citizens could feel safe at home and had less need to fantasize invulnerability. But part of the legacy of 9/11 has been a narcissistic wound, a gash in the fantasy of American invincibility. Such an experience will stimulate some people to face the complexities of the world, while others – those with more anxiety and fewer emotional resources to manage their anxiety - will cling more tightly to images of the supremacy which Trump promised to recover immediately.

The moral strengths and creative richness of American society have created visions of the American nation not based on narcissistic defences. But the scale of Trumpist nationalism suggests that Lasch's diagnosis was more accurate than we might have thought when Obama was elected. When deployed in the field of political ideologies, narcissism can rapidly conjure up a volatile nationalism, a huge shield which offers massive reassurance against many kinds of anxiety - social, economic, and cultural, and also existential.

Trumpism offers a magical healing of the narcissistic wound festering since 9/11, a complete restoration of the narcissistic defence. This is a psychically turbo-charged nationalistic populism, in which hatred of the 'elite' can reach hallucinogenic levels of intensity. It does not matter that Trump himself belongs to a global elite, one which has led the assault on national cultures. The strategic trick of the populist is always to appear from outside power, to be the virgin politician. Whether the narcissism which Trump embodies can be contained when he is in the White House, or whether it will have calamitous consequences, may depend on how strong and malignant are his needs for control and domination, as well as on how much the complex realities of politics may restrain him. And realities aside, whether 47.5% of the American public continue to support him depends on how much the narcissistic defence which he offers continues to work for them.

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With mainstream politics seemingly devoid of answers, many vote for the previously unthinkable

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In a country divided by race, class and the growing chasm of ideology, 2016 seemed to offer very little common ground between Clinton and Trump supporters. They appeared to represent not just competing political desires or interests but two fundamentally opposed worldviews. On one side stood a tried and true vision of tolerance and incremental progress. On the other misdirected hate and an impassioned cry for the complete sweeping away of the status quo.

First appearances, though, can be deceiving. Amidst these profound differences was a shared sense of alarmism tinged with optimism. Democrats were terrorised by Trump and his supporters' fascist overtones and excited that this would most likely spell the end of the Conservative extremism that had taken hold of the Republican Party since Obama's inauguration. For those on the Right, they feared a Clinton monarchy and the continuation of an economy and society that seemed content to leave them behind.

Even more fundamentally, both camps passionately embraced candidates who offered them little more than false solutions in a country that had seemed to run out of answers to its most pressing economic, social and political problems. Trump is the most obvious target for such a critique. The now president elect showed himself throughout the campaign to be a emotionally resonant con ma extraordinaire - promising to make American Great Again even while insulting a growing portion of its population. Clinton, however, was by no means free of such political sins. She offered high minded platitudes and piece meal reforms in place of a genuine record or vision of bold progressive change.

Emerging was a more chronic and serious disease afflicting American democracy. If the 21st century had thus far shown the American public anything – it was not just that government was ineffectual but that it was completely unimaginative. Amidst its sound bites and carefully staged debates, it spoke little to the real concerns and experiences of those they ostensibly represented. This was especially deplorable in a time when inequality was on the rise while economic and political power firmly rested in the hands of elites. Internationally, America seemed stuck in a vicious and costly cycle of militarism and terrorism. The country was further torn apart over issues of police brutality, mass incarceration and the looming threat of climate change.

The insurgent progressive candidacy of Bernie Sanders was to a new generation a potential antidote to this cultural paralysis. His rejection of corporate money and call for a "political revolution" showed glimmers of jumpstarting the sputtering nation from its ideological malaise and entrenched partisan battles. It was a call to take back the government for the people. Yet it also held out the hope that it was still possible for everyday citizens to mobilize and shape history rather than simply being shaped by it.

The elite Liberal dismissal of such efforts reflected just how deeply the cynicism from the Centre ran and how scared it was of radical change, regardless of which political direction it came from. Conversely, Trump tapped into a populist outrage with the "establishment", dragging it down to the lowest common denominator of racism, sexism and discrimination. Without any alternative, most Americans chose to stay home discontent with having to choose between (to quote one popular meme) "An incredibly shitty status quo" and a "dystopian nightmare future".

The cultural theorist Fredric Jameson famously declared "Someone once said that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism". On November 8th many Americans voted for the unthinkable after years of being told that their longing for a truly better future was little more than a naïve dream. The rest of the country now must wake up and confront our worst political nightmare.

Irrational beliefs matter

Populism is surging across the western world. Lately the surge spiked due to the prevalence of Donald Trump in the US presidential election. Although he lost the popular vote marginally, he won the majority of the electoral college votes. He was backed by a coalition of traditional Republican supporters and white blue-collar, low- and middle-income voters without a college degree residing mainly in rural areas and smaller cities.

It seems that the economy shaped the election. The majority of the electorate (52%), according to the exit poll, prioritized the economy as the most important issue facing the country. In this context, despite the good condition of the American economy including positive growth rates, record low unemployment, rising wages and falling poverty; most voters considered otherwise. As the exit poll suggests, the public majority (62%) evaluated the condition of the national economy as 'not good' or 'poor'. From this 62%, more than six out of ten voted for Trump. Furthermore, it seems that income inequality affected significantly the Trump vote. According to a post-election Bruegel analysis, Trump's electoral performance was stronger in the states displaying the highest inequality gap. As a result, the majority of the public (49%), according to the exit poll, considered him, rather than Clinton (46%), as the most capable to handle the economy.

It should be noted that the President-elect has attributed the responsibility for US economic woes mainly to globalization, including global competition, free trade and immigration. Against this backdrop, Trump has suggested as a remedy an economic plan consisted of protectionist policies along with large tax-cuts for the rich and deregulation to boost growth, wages and manufacturing employment.

However, his policy proposals have largely been criticized as unrealistic and damaging by the overwhelming majority of prominent economists including Nobel laureates. In particular, opposing voices point out that if Trump's policy is actually implemented, it is expected to worsen the condition of the economy undermining growth prospects, increasing unemployment, lowering wages, leading to deteriorating public finances which will likely hurt the low and middle income classes most.

So the question that naturally emerges, given that the electorate has been informed about the implications of Trump's economic policy, is why so many voters and especially those coming from the working class, accepted his narrative? Why did they vote against their own interests? In other words, why did they act irrationally?

It is possible to argue that voters hold systematically erroneous and biased beliefs about economics which can, to a great extent, explain their irrational political decisions. Specifically, voters tend, among others, to appear pessimistic about the course of the economy believing that it is going from bad to worse as well as to undervalue the economic benefits of interaction with foreigners. In the case of the US election, there are already some indications highlighting such beliefs. For example, although the economy has exited recession and returned to rapid growth rates, seven in ten Trump voters consider, according to a Pew Research Center survey, that the economy has gotten worse since 2008. Moreover, most Trump voters believe that the free trade agreements have been a 'bad thing' for the US hurting families' financial situation, while mean income and mean wealth have risen substantially since the 1980s. Furthermore, despite the fact the unemployment rate in the country has fallen below 5%, most Trump voters, according to the exit poll, share the view that international trade takes away US jobs rather than creates them.

Certainly public frustration with the inequality issue (and the falling manufacturing employment) is valid. Yet, the perception of most of Trump's voters about the root causes of these negative developments and the respective policy remedies is mainly erroneous. Globalisation appears to affect only partially these issues, which are actually multi-causal and are attributed more to other factors such as technological advancement, declining productivity, weakened labour unions, an ageing population, low public investment and insufficient welfare state provisions to compensate those who 'got left behind'.

Given the above, it could be said that irrational beliefs proved to be more powerful than reality, allowing Trump to capitalise on them, present 'globalisation' as the main enemy and himself and his program as the sole antidote for that.

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The politics of de-legitimacy

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It's a shock. He beat the polls, overturned established political knowledge about how to run a modern campaign and suspended the laws of political gravity that always pull down deeply-flawed and gaffe-prone politicians.

But Trump's victory is a symbol of a lack of confidence in government, a legitimation crisis in the USA. The ending of the long post-war boom and the declining confidence in the economic globalization project has raised a structural rather than just a temporal crisis of confidence.

His success in Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin was based on the discontent of white blue-collar workers whose wages have been declining since at least 1970 and accelerating since 2000. Many factors are at work but one of the most visible is deindustrialization. Manufacturing jobs provided the platform into the middle class for non-college educated workers. But manufacturing jobs have declined dramatically. There were more than 18 million manufacturing jobs in the USA in 1984. By 2012 it was little over 12 million. A dramatic decline in good paying jobs that depressed regional and urban economies outside of the two coasts.

In the global shift in manufacturing from the developed world to the developing world, a new middle class was created in South Korea and China while a middle class was undermined in the USA with low wage growth for non-college educated workers and a decline in industrial cities and regions across the country.

This discontent was not given political articulation by the two mainstream parties. The Republic Party used its working class base as electoral cannon fodder to promote an agenda that aided its big donors. The base was fed rhetoric while the business wing received all the benefits from free trade and the disciplining unions. Meanwhile, the Democratic Administrations of Clinton and Obama pursued an economic agenda that promoted globalization. If the Republicans had a trickle down theory that believed, despite evidence to the contrary, making the rich richer benefits everyone, the Democratic equivalent was that the benefits of globalization would eventually raise all boats. Many of the blue-collar workers felt ignored by Democrats who promoted economic globalization that undercut their jobs and a cultural relativism that undermined their values. Hilary Clinton's 2016 strategy was built on getting out the vote of blacks, Latinos and the millennials. She rarely addressed the concerns of white workers in rural and small town USA. White working class workers were ignored. Her Presidency promised a rerun of Obama but without the charisma and the sense of profound social optimism. The palpable animus against her was visceral, a mixture of Clinton-Obama fatigue, distrust of insider government-economic elites, resistance to social progressive policies and outright misogyny.

Shamelessly used by the Republicans and shabbily treated by the Democrats, many turned to Trump. His outsider status and maverick campaign resonated with a substantial mass of Americans harboring a sense of alienation from the mainstream political parties.

The cozy relationship between the main parties and the money of Wall Street was also a matter of public scorn. Both Democrats and Republicans worked to undercut the regulations in place since the New Deal that limited power of finance. And as the shackles were loosened the concentration of power continued and even more money flowed from the bankers to the politicians. There was a revolving door between Wall Street and the political establishment. It was a totally non-partisan affair as Hank Paulson, Robert Rubin, Timothy Geithner and Larry Summers moved from key government posts to a lucrative gig with banks and hedge funds and sometimes back into politics again. Later, in an act of political deafness or perhaps donor demand, the Obama Administration appointed Geithner, directly involved in the deal, to become Treasury Secretary. The 2008 bailout to a corrupt financial system signaled the extent of the Wall Street hijacking of government. Public discontent, exemplified in the rise of the Tea Party, soon hardened to a cynicism that is now baked into the present legitimation crisis. The Clinton candidacy was undermined by her Wall Street connections,

Trump's stunning electoral win demonstrates not so much the strength of his candidacy but the depth of despair felt by about the country's direction. His win is the equivalent of a scream of resentment, an articulation of alienation and a symbol of a deep crisis of legitimation.

There are six types of ugly American and Donald Trump is all of them

If non-Americans could vote for what is often called "leader of the free world", Hillary Clinton would easily be the next US president. WIN/Gallup surveyed world opinion and Donald Trump's support is extremely weak (apart from in Russia). Trump polled at 15% in Australia, 8% in Germany, 5% in Mexico, 4% in Spain, and 3% in Jordan, Japan and South Korea.

Some of this has to do with Trump's possible foreign policies: the Japanese and South Koreans are key allies one day, and on their own the next day with encouragement to nuke up. Mexicans have been told they are going to pay for that "tremendous wall" along their roughly 3200-kilometre border with the US, which would cost approximately US$12 billion to build. This boast was unlikely to win Mexicans over to Trump.

However, while there is widespread disapproval of Trump's nationalist, protectionist and racist policies, it is his persona that most repels non-Americans. Trump is strongly disliked across the world because he is the archetypal "ugly American": obnoxious, uncouth, boastful, materialistic, and duplicitous.

I am writing a book on negative stereotypes about Americans, and Trump is the gift that keeps on giving. He is one of those Americans that foreigners have instantly strong opinions about. When George W. Bush ran for the presidency, and when Sarah Palin was chosen by Senator John McCain as his presidential running-mate, there was a mountain of criticism around the globe about their ignorance and parochialism.

People everywhere seemed to be saying – based on very little information – "I know this kind of American and I do not like them". This reaction occurs because there is a long-standing stock of stereotypes about Americans that go back to the early 19th century, instantly available to animate one's feelings.

My research, based on reading more than 100 travel books written by Europeans from the early 19th century, argues six dominant stereotypes were constructed in the 1820s and 1830s. They have persisted ever since. These were: that American manners were extremely deficient; that Americans were often anti-intellectual, uncultured, and ignorant; that Americans lived ultimately bland lives; that Americans were particularly prone to boasting and annoying patriotism; that Americans were money obsessed and financially untrustworthy; and finally that Americans were hypocrites. Trump, for many, is the embodiment of these negative national stereotypes.

1. Trump's manners: In terms of manners, Trump is the schoolyard bully as CEO. Trump's bad manners could generously be viewed as anti-elitist populism challenging the failing status quo.
2. Anti-intellectualism: Forget Trump's Wharton School MBA – and his boast that "I know words, I have the best words". When it comes to uncouth anti-intellectualism, Trump's simplistic solutions, lowest common denominator attacks on opponents, and constant disregard for experts and their findings, makes him top of the class of loud-mouthed American bloviators for many. In an earlier American generation, such rhetoric was associated with the Know-Nothing anti-immigration movement.
3. Bland lives: The third stereotype – that Americans are sameish and live bland lives – would seem at first glance to miss the mark with Trump. This view of Americans is that their lives, to quote de Tocqueville, are particularly "unpoetic" and they live by cliches and hollow catchphrases like "have a nice day". If one takes a deeper look at Trump and his enterprises, he has a remarkable talent for making glamour bland and soulless. Behind all the bluster, Trump's vocabulary is repetitive and dull as he repeats the same platitudes and self-praise over and over. And for all of his money, the Trump diet consists of lots of McDonald's meals, extremely well-done crispy steak, diet cola, and no alcohol. In a world where eating a variety of food has become commonplace, Trump's diet lacks sophistication and imagination. Not only unhealthy, but for many trashy.
4. Trump the patriot: When it comes to boasting, Trump is constantly self-congratulatory and arguably the biggest self-promoter in living memory. His patriotism is wrapped up in his claim that America will get so used to "winning" everything under a Trump presidency it will get sick of winning. He vaingloriously promotes his poll numbers, primary victories and the dismissal of his opponents as "so easy to beat".
5. Money, money, money: His claim to have "made it" financially is central to Trump's appeal to many Americans. However, outside of America, boasting about wealth and fame is largely seen as gauche.
6. Hypocrisy: Lastly, the saying that "those in glass-houses should not throw stones" is something that never occurs to Trump. Being a hypocrite clearly does not concern him and this is one of those infuriating traits that makes him so strongly disliked from Norway to Chile.

It is tempting to proclaim Trump is very familiar to us because he embodies the worst things about Americans. However, these traits are apparent across the world. Trump therefore is not merely an "ugly American" but amplifies commonplace cultural trends, such as narcissism, self-centredness, gnat-like attention spans, obsessive self-regard, preoccupation with the number of followers one has and a lack of interest in listening to others. These trends can be passed off "American", but if we are honest, this behaviour is all around us. To prevent the next Trump – and there will be more – requires challenging the sources of selfishness in modern culture that are on the rise everywhere.

A version of this article was originally published on The Conversation.

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Reflections on the 2016 US Election

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The most important takeaway of the US 2016 presidential election is that we are entering transitional times, with unusual levels of political turbulence the order of the day. This is true not just in the United States, but, to varying degrees, worldwide. At its core, the cause is a stagnant capitalist economy, with growing inequality, unemployment and underemployment, poverty and precariousness the emerging features. Upon this is layered a growing sense of corruption in governance, and the inability of governing institutions in ostensible democracies to represent the interests of the bulk of the population to address and solve problems in an efficient, just and humane manner. And foremost among those problems are inequality, militarism and the climate crisis.

This is certainly the case in the United States, where the mainstreams of both major political parties were significantly abandoned by their voters in 2016. In stagnant and corrupt times the mainstream is increasingly dismissed as ineffectual and corrupt. As we learned in the 1930s, when the world was in a similar political economic crisis, the dominant growing alternatives are an authoritarian anti-democratic pseudo-populism on the right, generally known as fascism, and democratic socialism on the left. In the United States, the campaigns of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders reflected elements of these two traditions respectively, and both did dramatically better than anyone would have thought possible for generations.

Indeed, had the Democratic Party not rigged the primary process in close collaboration with Hillary Clinton and the news media to guarantee she got the nomination over Sanders—indeed, to prevent any effective competition for the nomination—she may well have been defeated in the spring. There is reason to believe that Sanders, who is hugely popular among independent voters, would have crushed Trump in a general election. The turnout and enthusiasm among young people would have been markedly higher—Sanders is arguably the most popular politician with voters under 30 in modern American history—and early analysis of the election results suggest such a higher turnout would have provided victory margins in several of the states Hillary lost.

The election also drew attention to a number of issues that undermine the notion that the United States can be termed a democracy, unless one uses scare quotes.

Hillary Clinton actually won the election, if one simply looks at the popular vote. She lost decisively in the "electoral college," an absurd device put in the constitution primarily so slave-owning states could get credit for the slave population—each slave counted as 3/5 of a person—without letting them vote.

The total vote for all the House of Representative races split fairly evenly between the two parties, but the Republicans got a landslide 46 seat majority, largely due to gerrymandering, whereby politicians rig election districts to favor the dominant party at the state level.

Moreover, millions of Americans were unable to vote because they failed to meet strict identification policies put in place universally by Republican state governments with the clear intent of lowering the number of poor and minority voters.

The US system makes "lesser-of-two evils" voting highly rational behavior, thereby locking in the two-party duopoly and allowing them to serve corporate interests and not worry about losing their voters to the one permissible hated alternative.

And, to top it off, the total cost of the 2016 campaigns has yet to be tabulated, but it stands to be much like 2012, when US candidates spent 30-40 times more per voter than did candidates in Germany or Britain in their most recent national elections, mostly for generally asinine TV political advertisements. Much of that cash comes from wealthy individuals and corporations and is unaccountable "dark money."

So is it any surprise that the United States has the lowest voter turnout of any major democracy in the world, with barely 50 percent of the voting-age population participating in 2016?

There has been much grumbling about how the mainstream media has been dreadful and superficial in its election coverage, and it is justified. But there was a far greater problem in 2016 that got almost no mention: there is very little coverage of political races by journalists any longer. The US model of commercial journalism has collapsed and when people go to the polls they have almost no idea who the candidates are and what they stand for aside from what they might have seen in the TV ads. Unless there are clear public policies to establish a competitive independent news media, it is difficult to see how the governing system can be corralled to serve the interests of the people. Whatever their flaws, that was something the framers of the constitution understood in their bone marrow. In a genuine democracy, this would be an issue of the highest magnitude.

The Wørd: Stupid Power

My fellow Americans. [*Well, a little less than half of you.*] From the fiery forge of the 2016 presidential elections has emerged our Great Leader. [*Trump Hates Love.*] And this Great Leader has promised to Make America Great ... Again. [*Backwards and Upwards!*] I know that I, for one, am looking forward to living in the swanky hotel that will be Trump America. [*Until it goes bankrupt.*] But I also know that many of you [*a little over half*] are asking yourselves, hey, just how the hell is this guy even going to make things mediocre? Many of you are thinking [*more of an internal shriek*], hey, this guy has never met a fact that he didn't ignore. What's so great about that? [*You get to wear your hair any way you want.*]

Well, I'm here to tell you what's so great about that. I'm here to let you in on the great secret of our Great Leader's great strength. [*Oh ... great.*] And that secret is: Stupid Power. [*Ditto. The phrase works meta, too.*] Let me repeat that: Stupid Power. Now, some may call it the Power of Stupid. [*Opposite to the Power of Love. Huey Lewis shout-out!*] But that's too many words for me. That sounds too smart. Too accurate. And where did smart and accurate ever get us anyway? [*Most recently, out of the Bush Great Recession.*] No, I'm here to tell you about the pure and simple bullet train of Stupid Power. I'm here to invite you to climb aboard [*the Soulless Train!*] for a thrilling ride straight off the rails. [*Meeeeeeeeeeee!*] You see, folks, with Stupid Power, you don't need no science. [*Is it hot in here to you?*] You don't need no education. [*Unless you can teach "leadership" with a straight face.*] You just need your deeply held beliefs [*eventually to be pried from your dead, cold hands*] founded on the down-to-earth creed of a gun to love, a bible to misconstrue, several key demographic groups to hate [*Let Freedom Sting!*], and plenty of salt and sugar in your diet. [*Mmm, that nice cushy lining of brain-fat.*] After all, these principles are what made America Great in the first place. [*White supremacist capitalist patriarchy.*] And these core values, under the guidance of our new Great Leader, surely will transport us back to that great future. [*Kicking and screaming in a DeLorean.*]

Now, I acknowledge that Liberals are profoundly disappointed with the election results. [*A woman just can't win for winning.*] I realize they feel like all the hope and change of the past eight years [*hereafter to be known officially as "the obamanation"*] will be wiped out in our Great Leader's first one hundred days. [*Hey, I can do it in fifty. Believe you me.*] But you Liberals need to stop your progressive bellyaching. You need to man-up [*literally*] and get with the Greatness program. [*Translated: you pussies are about to be grabbed.*] Manifestly, this is Destiny. This is God's Will. His Great Plan at work. Because, let's face it, God obviously wants old white men to be rich and powerful. Just look at His selfies. [*Visual: Michelangelo's "Creation of Adam" with Trump's head replacing Adam's.*] Yeah, that's right. That's strictly man-on-man action there, folks. That's proof. That's Providence. (Aside: Oh my, Adam sure does have small hands.) Anyway, my point is, Liberals, what have you got to lose? You can never get your act together anyway. [*Feel the Berned.*] You just put up the most qualified candidate ever to run for president [*except for the naughty bits*] and she was soundly defeated by the minority of voters.

The American people have spoken [*all 538 of them in the Electoral College*], and the outcome is clear. Our Great Leader has lead a populist revolution in America propelled by congressional gridlock, the sky-high ratings of for-profit news outlets, systematic voter suppression, a public addicted to reality TV, and an anti-elitism personified by a trust-fund brat. [*Yep. What he said.*] That's right, folks. Only in America. Only in America. So, Liberals, put an end to your fruitless street protests [*#notYOURpresidentanywaysucka*]. Cross over to the Drumpf side [*audio: Darth Vader breathing*] and surrender to the delicious certainty of Stupid Power. It's a belief you can get behind, that leaves no doubt in your mind. [*Because your mind isn't involved in the transaction.*] It's a glorious reaffirmation of the inspiring vision for America as set out by the Founding Fathers. [*Let Caucasian boys be Caucasian boys!*] It leads inevitably to the Greatest Good. [*For the Greatest Few. Obfuscate that pyramidal order!*] Yes, the blessings of Stupid Power have brought us to this historic moment. So what do you say we just shut that whole history thing down right now. We're there. We're finished. We're done. We've arrived. [*The Neoliberal Jerusalem!*] Remember: Stupid is as Stupid *doesn't* do. And that's The Wørd.

[Note: a huge tip of Uncle Sam's top hat to Stephen Colbert, who Made Satire Great Again, for his device of satiric argumentation, The Wørd.]

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ISBN 978-1-910042-10-6