



Trump Shock

Eight takeaways from this week's election stunner

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As political scientists and journalists take apart Tuesday's election, we will learn more about how this happened. Right now many of us are in a state of disbelief. While I work through the five levels of grief (I am far from acceptance), here are eight takeaways from the tsunami we just witnessed:

1. President Obama may be the best *one-off* political figure of our time: The President was never able to translate his electoral successes into the political expansion of the Democratic Party. Throughout most of the eight years of his presidency, Republicans picked up seats in the House and Senate and they rolled up victories in governorships and state houses. In 2008, Democrats had a majority of governorships and state houses; those numbers have declined dramatically since that time. Obama redefined what was possible in America in significant ways, but what that ultimately meant for the Democratic Party is less clear. He was transformational as an intellect, personality and symbol—but less so as a politician or movement builder.
2. Trump blew up the national Republican Party: Trump built a coalition of non-elite Republican moderates and conservatives along with industrial area independents and Democrats. He merged those two overwhelmingly white constituencies into a populist and nationalist movement, alienated by global change. His message organized Rust Belt workers from Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, and Wisconsin, who used to be a critical part of the Democratic Party, into an anti-trade constituency. Is this a new recipe for a Republican Party whose elites, from the National Review to the Cato Institute, were hostile to Trump's anti-immigration and anti-free trade rhetoric? How will Trump's departure from free market conservatism and neocon foreign policy play out with Republicans in the House and Senate? Nobody knows.

The end of Clinton influence in the Democratic Party has arrived. Democrats need to do a real listening tour in places like the Rust Belt, not for political theater, but to bridge the disconnection between the political donor class and fly-over country.

3. The 2012 Republican autopsy was right, just not yet: Neocon David Frum, a former George W. Bush speechwriter, wrote a great autopsy for the Republicans after Mitt Romney's 2012 defeat. He argued that if the Republican Party was to compete as a national party it must expand its base in a nation that is changing dramatically, as a result of immigration and the greying of the traditional Republican base. Frum and others also argued that some of the Republican focus on social issues was politically deadly in a culture war they had largely lost. I think Frum was right, even though that was not the playbook Trump used. Yet if the Republicans do not take that critique seriously—if they overplay their current hand—they will have trouble over the long term.
4. The Democrats have an identity crisis: So what will the 2016 Democratic Party autopsy look like? I think it will have to do with the Party's identity crisis as it relates to economic growth policy. The Bernie-Hillary contest was one manifestation of the crisis: How left (socialist) versus centrist (social democratic) is the party? The Dems are made up of coastal metropolitan hubs, college towns, African American and Latino communities, immigrants, and important civil rights and social identity groups such as the LGBTQ community, women's rights constituencies, and environmentalists. Put those groups together with economic elites from media, finance, and technology and you have today's Democratic coalition. But the parts have to add up to a coherent whole regarding the economy. The Democrats cannot only be a list of groups (let alone a list of grievances); they must have a common economic vision that speaks to equity concerns as well as national economic growth. That vision will have to be built on a more nuanced understanding of our advantages and disadvantages in the global economy than the political campaign season would allow.

The revolt against elites reached a boiling point: In 1994, the cultural theorist Christopher Lasch wrote *Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy*. Playing off of Ortega y Gasset's 1929 publication *Revolt of the Masses* that described the rise of the mass movements overtaking Europe, Lasch turned the argument on its head. He identified our time as a period when well-educated and wealthy elites with common backgrounds and affiliations could withdraw from local and national life, adopting transnational relationships and culturally protected enclaves. This was their revolt, an exit from ordinary public life. Lasch's elites are liberal with respect to social diversity values but increasingly disconnected from the lives of their countrymen. Moreover, while they exert great cultural and political influence through government, universities, think tanks, corporations, and philanthropy, they do not have to play by conventional rules or constraints. More than at other times, today's elites are absentee landlords. If you think a revolt against economic and cultural elites was not a driver of this election, you are living under a rock. How this reaction manifests in the future is the question many are nervously asking.

5. The national media lost enormous credibility: This is an obvious takeaway but still worth mentioning. The line between commentators, political operatives, and journalists was breached. One Fox program functioned as a de facto Trump campaign office. One CNN commentator shared debate questions with the Democratic National Committee. News formats were partisan debates from the usual suspects and largely played out in a fact free zone. Some of the problem is structural. The proliferation of politically-segmented news sources and blogs has naturally infected television stations competing for audience. Cable

news plays to segmented political markets: Fox to the right and MSNBC to the left. Moreover, social media and the Internet make it possible for low content news services and aggregators to yield enormous power. Drudge and Breitbart were more important to the success of Trump than the Republican National Committee. The national media needs to ask itself tough questions about roles and standards. We no longer have a common set of facts delivered from voices we trust. The increasingly partisan entertainers degrade democracy.

To win, the Democrats cannot only be a list of groups (or a list of grievances); they must have a common economic vision that speaks to equity concerns as well as national economic growth.

6. Clinton Inc. is Over: Hillary Clinton showed enormous dignity in how she handled defeat. She was the gracious patriot who said it is time to remember we are one nation and Trump will be our President. The candidate who thought she was a shoo-in in 2008 but lost to an unexpected outsider, lost to another outsider despite having enormous advantages of experience, money, political demography, and party organization. The end of Clinton influence in the Democratic Party has arrived. Loyalists will go on television and say she is still the head of the Democratic Party. But it is not so, or at least it should not be so. The Party needs to move on from Hillary and Bill. The sooner Democrats come to terms with that, the better. And they need to do a real listening tour in places like the Rust Belt, not for political theater, but to bridge the disconnect between the political donor class and fly-over country.
7. The Battle of Cultural Bubbles: We have national divisions of race and social class, an enormous number of foreign born citizens, the power of gerrymandering to create safe districts, and a news delivery system that reinforces rather than challenges our views. The result: We increasingly live in narrowly-defined idea bubbles. We talk and listen to like-minded people. Many of us live in political districts that have been Democratic or Republican since the Neolithic. Politicians do not have to seek votes from those that may disagree with them. Think of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, where dozens of legislators run unopposed every two years. The battle between Trump and Clinton was a battle between vastly different narratives regarding the state of the nation. No candidate felt the need to cross lanes and it is likely neither candidate knew how to do just that.

The election is over and now governing begins. Let's hope we pay as close attention to that as we did to all the off-putting campaign rhetoric. And let's get involved more than ever. The future is too important to leave to politicians.