Trump's Message Not Built To Win

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Somehow Donald Trump has survived to fight another day. But with each passing hour, it becomes more obvious that he is going to lose this election, and most likely take a Republican Senate down with him. Even Republican control of the House is now in jeopardy.

As Republicans begin to pick up the pieces, it will be all too easy for them to learn the wrong lessons from this debacle. Some suggest that the problem is not Trump's message but the messenger. Perhaps if there were a candidate who could peddle Trumpism without being a narcissistic vulgarian who brags about committing sexual assault, then the outcome would be different?

Undoubtedly in 2020, Republican primaries will be crowded with candidates trying to tap into Trump's fervent base, with messages of workingclass nationalism and populism. That would be a big mistake.

The problem is not just Trump, awful candidate though he may be, but Trumpism itself.

To start with, it's a losing message. The voting population of today is not the voting population of the 1950s, or even the 1990s. White voters have declined from 78 percent of the electorate as recently as 2000 to just 69 percent today. And those demographics are not going to change in ways that are favorable to Trump's message.

One cannot win an election by running for president of Breitbart Nation.

Besides, we already have one political party committed to big government. If history should teach Republicans anything, it is that they can't win a bidding war with Democrats. Indeed, the biggest victories that Republicans have had, from Ronald Reagan to the tea party–fueled midterms of 2010, have been driven by a clear alternative of limited government and individual liberty. Trump has all but completely disavowed this type of conservatism. His campaign has been one long string of promises for government to do and spend more. How are voters to tell a Trumpian GOP from the Democrats?

But beyond political strategy, Trumpism is wrong for the country. We are faced with massive debts and unsustainable entitlements that our children will have to pay for. Economic growth is barely above water, meaning fewer jobs and lower wages. Poverty remains too high. Obamacare is falling apart.

Trumpism is less about solving these problems than about dividing up the spoils. It is about using government to benefit Trump's constituency. It is a fixed-pie view of the economy, concerned about how the pie is divvied up, rather than about growing the pie.

Republicans need to reject this view of the world and, instead, embrace an open and optimistic message of growth and opportunity.

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