

UNCERTAINTY: ELECTIONS, BREXIT, TERRORISM,
GEO-POLICIES, ISLAMIC REVOLUTION

AS AMERICA TRUMP(ETS), THE WORLD GETS TINNITUS:
CONSTRUING THE PERSONAL/POLITICAL SPHERE
OF DONALD TRUMP'S SUPPORTERS AND ITS EFFECTS
UPON ACCURATELY FORECASTING THE ELECTION OF 2016

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“There are only two things we know about the future. One is where and when eclipses will take place and the other is that a kitten will never grow up into a rhinoceros. Nevertheless, we have to worry about the future, simply because the greatest dilemma of mankind is that all knowledge is about the past and all decisions are about the future. I frankly despair of finding any single or simple rule of universal betterment.”

(Kenneth Boulding, “The dodo didn’t make it: survival and betterment”, 1971, p. 19)

Abstract. *Drawing from the theories of Kenneth Boulding on issues of the production of social “goods” and “bads” in either deteriorating or appreciating social systems (driven often by “rational” individual choices that lead in a dysfunctional system to irrational collective outcomes) and the Thomas theorem (on the very real effects of fictive pieces of knowledge), Eric Gilder’s analysis, presented at the Conference with the same title as this study and organized at the Institute of Political Sciences and International Relations “Ion I.C. Brătianu” of the Romanian Academy at the 11th of July 2016, sought to describe the unique 2016 US Presidential election, wherein all the expected (albeit implicit) rules of the political process have been subverted/transcended by events. This political process upheaval is, in part, explained by the semantic insights of Alfred Korzybski’s “the map is not the territory” contributions, Chris Hayes distinction between “institutionalist” and “insurrectionist” political orientations, the application of ethical psychological profiles provided by Karen J. Greenberg and social-theological orientations by theologian Jürgen Moltmann. Scott Eastman defined (on the same occasion) the general approach to geopolitical forecasting that was refined during a*

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multi-year, US intelligence community financed, research project. The methodology establishes a base rate, applies Bayesian updating, rigorously seeks potential Black Swan events (Nassim Taleb), studies technicalities (e.g. US Electoral College), and involves working collaboratively in motivated and intellectually diverse teams where ad hominem attacks are unacceptable. The application of this process to the current US presidential election and the rise of Trump, tracks a breakdown in substantive democracy to a more procedural democracy, as well an erosion of trust in traditional institutions and societal leaders. Forecasting the US presidential election of 2016 vexed traditional models, as a paradigm shift of the Overton window transpired. The shift also played out across Europe with the Brexit and rise of nationalist political parties. The affects of globalization and a technological transformation to an increasingly robotized workplace are trends that may transcend the ability of the current political system to adequately address the needs of the populous, but provide fodder for campaigns.

Keywords: *election, politics, United States, Donald Trump, democracy, forecasting.*

Introduction

The 2016 USA Presidential election has occurred, and the result has been seen by many as a wild ride, both before and after polling on 8th November. Both major party campaigns had stated that this election was the most vital in our lifetime. While the Democratic candidate seemed to be a “normal” politician with her long public service resume (with all the positive and negative images that entails), the Republican President-elect, Donald Trump, is an ‘abnormal’ politician, who ran on a platform and along a trajectory that defied normal political processes and rationalities. He had bested a highly populated field of primary challengers, defied political pundits, and even the establishment of the Republican Party itself to, in a real sense, successfully mount a “hostile takeover” of the Republican “brand.” How did this political process/procedural revolution happen and why? There are many structural reasons that can be cited, but this paper will focus on these interlocking ideas in offering its explanation:

- Following W. I. Thomas¹, we need to recall that it is not what is “objectively” true that matters about people, politics, and policies but what people believe is true about the world around them that matters, however “false” it might be;

- Novelist and social reformer Upton Sinclair’s complementary notion that “It is difficult to get a man to understand something, when his salary depends on his not understanding it.”² These ideas are focused upon what individuals think, believe and behave, but they have social roots;

¹ W. I. Thomas & D.S. Thomas, , *The child in America: behavior problems and programs*, Knopf, New York, 1928, pp. 571-572.

² U. Sinclair, *I, candidate for governor: and how I got licked*, Reprint, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1935/1994, p. 109.

• Therefore, as Kenneth Boulding states, “If we think of knowledge as a kind of ecological system of images and ideas inhabiting the three billion human nervous systems, then obviously the principles which govern this ecological system are not necessarily the principles which govern the spread of truth. That is, the development and spread of realistic images of the world is not something that is automatic. It only takes place under very special circumstances. The easiest thing to spread is nonsense, and man has frequently put a good deal of effort into this” (p. 21)³;

• Trust in elite-led modern governance in ostensibly open, democratic societies has drastically fallen, because rapid technological and economic/political change have left many people worse off, both in absolute and relative terms, and neo-Darwinist policies have exacerbated insecurities;

• Such stressed people and societies tend to be motivated, in Boulding’s (1971) terms, more by drives towards mutual malevolence rather than mutual benevolence, i.e., “I am pleased if you are worse off” than me, even if I suffer too.

Via this toxic social-psychological cocktail, we are transported either back into a pre-rational world in which decisions are best explained by reference to Freud, or perhaps forward into a post-rational world best explained by reference to “The Matrix” and an updated Skinnerism. The authors hold that while the “rational” world of Boulding, Korzybski, and others might still be able to explain what has happened here recently, but it and the social-democratic public sphere (best articulated by Habermas)⁴, albeit with all its caveats and reservations, is nonetheless very much under threat as an organizing principle of future politics in the USA and beyond⁵.

³ See, too, Golay (2008), “Namely, this [life] experience is mediated by the individual’s nervous system and by his larger environment, or what I refer to as the *facticity* or *situatedness* of his experience, before his experience gets verbalized. The recognition of this fact – viewing the individual not as an “experience” but, due to the mediation of these two non-verbal levels, as rather an “*expresser* of experiences” – makes us reconsider the assumption that language can be taken at face-value to be a non-interpretative tool for *objectively* depicting any experience of the extensional world.” [emphases in original] (p. 40).

⁴ See: J. Habermas, “For a democratic polarisation: how to pull the ground from under right-wing populism”, *Social Europe*. 17 November 2016.

Retrieved: <https://www.socialeurope.eu/2016/11/democratic-polarisation-pull-ground-right-wing-populism/#> accessed 30 November 2016.

⁵ See: K. Wilber, *Integral Psychology: Consciousness, Spirit, Psychology, Therapy*, 2000, especially this formulation of being and self-understanding among the population. In his review of the book, Gilder (2008, April) states, “Beginning with Maslow’s ‘hierarchy of needs’, but moving beyond it, Wilber outlines six first-tier concentric levels of social-individual functioning in his ‘spirals of existence’, including (in modern ‘Western’ societies) a notation of the percentage of the population functioning at that ‘wave’ of being versus the social power they possess: (1) archaic-instinctual (0.1% of population, 0% of power); (2) magical-animistic (10%, 1%); (3) power gods (2%, 5%); (4) conformist rule (40%, 30%); (5) scientific achievement (30%, 50%); (6) the sensitive self (30%, 15%)” (p. 187). As Gilder notes in a footnote, “Descriptors Wilber gives of the last three waves of thought are revealing, with ‘conformist’ being the Puritan traditional American, William Whyte’s ‘organization man’, Singapore’s ideal citizen, etc., with ‘scientific achievement’ being the rational, power-influencing learned ‘leadership class’ of pragmatists, and the ‘sensitive soul’ being the humanistic/spiritual members of Milovan Djilas’ ‘new class’, Paul Fussell’s ‘Class X’, and the ‘bobos’ lately lampooned by David Brooks” (p. 187). The authors posit that Trump might well be classified as being in the “power god” mode, with his followers being an admixture of “power god” “magical-animistic” or “conformist” construers.

*The Challenge to the US Political System:
Seven Socio-Political Guardrails Undermined*

In “Donald Trump and the Seven Broken Guardrails of Democracy,” David Frum notes what people in the US generally *believed* was true about the guiding principles (guardrails) of US politics pre-Trump and how he and his campaign (and others before him) have ignored, violated or simply bypassed them. In turn, these beliefs have been:

A. A candidate’s sense of self-less-ness in seeking high political office, i.e., that one seeks to serve (however partially and imperfectly) the good of all citizens in the function of the office sought, and that private and public interests of a leader are not defined as one-and-the-same.

B. That politicians, however imperfectly, can be basically trusted to carry out the public duties of their office and also seek to fulfill the promises made to voters in their campaigns.

C. That candidates for President fulfill “the expectation” that he or she “should possess deep – or at least adequate – knowledge of public affairs”.

D. That candidates for an established political Party, particularly the Presidential candidate thereof, would adhere, at least partially, to the ideological principles of the Party that nominated them.

E. That candidates for President have a respect for understanding and caring about (inter)national security issues and concerns.

F. That candidates for higher political offices in the United States hold to a pluralistic creed of equal rights and provision of opportunities for all citizens.

G. That US candidates for office see their political opponents as, in the end, fellow Americans with whom they hold a common history and core beliefs, a unifying world-view. (Related to this, recent statements about contesting the outcome of a ‘rigged’ election undermine the strong norm that when the election is over, the outcome and winner is accepted as legitimate.)

Frum then outlines numerous examples of how candidate Trump has violated all of these norms in pursuit of enhancing his status as an outsider that will change how Washington operates. As he concludes, something else is driving the campaign and it is not policy:

Policy, however, is not the first or second or third impetus of the Trump campaign. It’s driven by something else – and the source of that something is found inside the conservative and Republican world, not outside. The Trump phenomenon is the effect of many causes. Yet overhanging all the causes is the central question: Why did Republicans and conservatives react to those causes as they did? There were alternatives. Of all the alternatives for their post-Obama future, Republicans and conservatives selected the most self-destructive of the options before them. Why? What went wrong? That will be the excruciating mystery to ponder during the long and difficult work of reconstruction ahead⁶.

Some beginning can perhaps be had to disentangle the mystery by looking at the varied pillars of the conservative movement in the USA, and how they have reinforced (or not) the current status moment.

⁶ David Frum, “Donald Trump and the Seven Broken Guardrails of Democracy,” n. p.

*The Post WWII Conservative Political Movement:
Histories as Anticipations*

In “The Pillars of Modern American Conservatism,” Alfred S. Regnery first states:

Although conservatism [in the United States] as we know it today is a relatively new movement – it emerged after World War II and only became a political force in the 1960s – it is based on ideas that are as old as Western civilization itself. The intellectual foundations on which this movement has been built stretch back to antiquity, were further developed during the Middle Ages and in eighteenth – and nineteenth-century England, and were ultimately formulated into a coherent political philosophy at the time of the founding of the United States. In a real sense, conservatism is Western civilization⁷.

Regnery then outlines the four pillars (value orientations) of ‘classic’ conservatism in America. They are a reverence for *liberty; tradition and order; rule of law*; and, *a belief in God*. Amplifying on these points, he turns to one of the founding fathers of modern American conservatism, Russell Kirk, who employed a geographic synecdoche of key cities in history to embody these principles: From Jerusalem came a reverence for transcendent order, forming “one of the most essential ideas of conservatism – that man does not have all the answers, that there is a power greater than man to which we owe our lives and everything that is good.” From Athens comes the thought of Plato and Aristotle who provided conservatism with its ethical basis, focused on humans seeking the good within an ordered community. “Ethics and politics are, they believed, at the root of man’s existence: ethics is what establishes one’s character, and politics is the means by which human beings can achieve the good life.” Specifically, “Man is a political animal, [Aristotle] taught, and only recognizes his talents and how to use them for the common good if he is part of a community.” Rome provided a system of ordered liberty (via a republic) that had been missing in the two other cities, via the rule of (written) law and the separation of powers between branches of government. (Later, imperial Rome, became a short-hand for conservatives to this day who decry the laxity of citizens who lose the virtue to govern themselves by a loss of self-control and the abuses of a government bent on ruling an ever-expanding empire.) Finally, the city of London gets a mention by Regnery, because England was the locale of the birth of the Magna Carta of 1215 and the English common law, which “taught the concept of the permanence of the law – the principle of the supremacy of law, meaning that an enduring law exists and must be obeyed by all men.” Of course, there were distinctions among the Anglo-Saxon luminaries in the political thought Parthenon (John Locke, John Stuart Mill, David Hume, Edmund Burke), where Burke has been seen as the towering father figure of traditional conservatism, due to his embrace of the “wisdom of tradition and order,” to wit:

To Burke, habit, instinct, custom, faith, reverence, prejudice – the accumulated practical knowledge acquired through experience – is more important than

⁷ Alfred S. Regnery, “The Pillars of Modern American Conservatism,” p. 3.

abstract speculation. Tradition, in other words, is vital for a good society. And if laws are reasonable, Burke believed, the benefit of the security they provide compensates for any diminishment of an otherwise abstractly “perfect” freedom. It is not law and tradition as such that are to be feared, but arbitrary laws and arbitrary government. Burke also taught that the most important political virtue is prudence – the art of calculating the eventual results of policies, of avoiding extremes, of shunning haste⁸.

In the Post WWII period, which Regnery opines was culturally conservative but not politically conservative “at all” (in that the New Deal of FDR and the War had allowed/encouraged the US Federal government to increase in size and scope to meet new unavoidable demands) saw “the liberals” in control⁹. In reaction to this new ‘orthodoxy’ of governance, the four pillars of an older Conservatism were reformulated into three strands to meet the new conditions. Regnery states these as being: *libertarian economists* (with Ludwig von Mises and Milton Friedman being exemplars); Conservative *anti-Communists* who believed that Communism was the world’s greatest threat to order and liberty and (importantly) that US post-war liberalism was the beginning step towards socialism and then on towards totalitarian communism. In foreign affairs, they believed that the Yalta accords agreed between Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin were a sell-out by the West of Eastern and Central Europe. In internal affairs, they were afraid of communist subversion of American institutions by stealth, becoming active promoters of Joe McCarthy and his (second) ‘red scare’; and, 3. Conservative *traditionalists* were most concerned with the maintenance or re-establishment of a Burkean cultural conservatism, focused on keeping traditional norms of social behavior via an embrace of Judeo-Christian faith practices (exemplars included thinkers such as Russell Kirk, Richard Weaver, and William F. Buckley, Jr.). Their growing influence in the Republican Party led to the Party nominating Barry Goldwater as their candidate for President in 1964. Given his manta that “extremism in the pursuit of liberty was no vice” (seen by many Americans as a defense of discredited McCarthyism) as well as his embrace of the Wilmore Kendall’s stark view that the US should have dropped a nuclear bomb on China to end the Korean War, led to his losing the election to Lyndon Johnson, who won by a historical landslide.

The conservative movement and its triad was in abeyance through the 1960s, but had a break with the election of Ronald Reagan as Governor of California in 1966, and then Richard Nixon as President in 1968 (although he was not seen by many as a movement conservative.¹⁰) Reagan ran for the Republican nomination

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 6.

⁹ Because, the authors contend, corporate America by-and-large came to *like* the systematic change of economies of scale the now-dominant Keynesian economic model provided, even if they gave conservatives and their old-time governance values lip-service. The new system gave them smoother labor relations and more assured profits secured via government contracts. Even Republican President (and former Allied Commanding General) Eisenhower was powerless to stop the ominous growth of what he called at the end of his term of office “the military-industrial complex.”

¹⁰ This election presaged the rise of the emerging ethno-Republic insurrectionist Republic Party faction supporting Trump in the American National Party Presidential campaign of then-segregationist Presidential

for President in 1976, but lost the nomination to then-President Gerald Ford (who had become President with the resignation of President Nixon in 1974 as a result of the Watergate scandal). Ford then lost to Democratic nominee Jimmy Carter in the general election of 1976. But victory, for the movement, was only four years away.

In the years since Goldwater's defeat at the polls in 1964, many conservatives felt out-gunned and out-maneuvered in both the political (and more importantly social-cultural arena, as the protests and cultural revolution of what culminated in May 1968, both in the United States and Europe). In an echo of what is still heard today, many in the movement blamed the cultural industries, and especially the mass media news operations, as being biased against them, as were the two main policy think-tanks, the RAND Corporation and the Brookings Institution. Therefore, a number of financial heavyweights supportive of the movement had begun in the mid-1960s to fund alternative policy think tanks and broadcast news media outlets (many newspapers in the country were, and still are, quite conservative in editorial outlook). The result of their efforts was the founding of think tanks such as the American Enterprise Institute, and the Heritage Foundation, the Rockwell Institute, and so forth. The broadcast media was joined (in 1996) by brash Fox News (envisioned by recently departing CEO Roger Ailes as far back as 1968 as a needed counterweight to the "liberal" mainstream media; a dedicated Republican Party TV broadcast platform) along with radio talk show commentators/provocateurs such as Rush Limbaugh. With their intellectual and political capital, the Republicans held the Presidency from 1980 until 1992, While the election of Bill Clinton grieved movement social conservatives, fiscal conservatives were content because Reaganomics had replaced Keynesianism as the economic norm, and Clinton followed in that path, passing a welfare reform bill that contained many platform conservative elements.

Conservatives should have been happy with the election of George Bush Junior in a tight race with Democrat Al Gore in 2000 (which in the end had to be adjudicated by the Supreme Court in a controversial one-off decision declaring a re-count of contested Florida null and void, thus giving the election to Bush), but they were disappointed with his seeking out a "compassionate Conservatism" platform that pleased few, particularly Calvinist-minded social conservatives. The events of 9-11, while causing the country to initially rally around the flag and President, alarmed many libertarians in the Party (and beyond) with the vast extension and expansion of Federal government powers under the Patriot Acts. Added to this, many fiscal conservatives became alarmed with ever-increasing national government expenditure, both abroad and at home. Even further, the misadventures of an ill-conceived and cynical Iraq War caused the neo-isolationists (always a part of the Republican Party, but in retreat to the one-world internationalists during the Cold War) to gain influence. Therefore, already

candidate George Wallace. He won electoral votes in five Southern states, by traditional Democratic voters who felt betrayed by Lyndon Johnson when he signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which enshrined political equality of African-Americans into federal law, overturning extant discriminatory state laws in the region.

extant gaps between the three stands of the Conservative movement noted by Regnery began to widen, causing the movement's core to unravel, and many former Republicans today would be classed as moderate Democrats via policy positions. Today, according to the authors of the *Four Faces of the Republican Party*, Henry Olsen and Dante Scala¹¹, the Republican Party has “moderate or somewhat liberal” voters (25-30%), “somewhat conservative” voters, “very conservative, evangelical” voters (concentrated in the South and/or border states, often making up about 25% of the total), and “very conservative, secular” voters (5-10%, but forming the bulk of the Party's policy elite in Washington, D.C. and other urban centers). According to Olsen, “somewhat conservative” voters form the bedrock of the present Republican Party nationwide (35-40%) but often are overlooked or misunderstood by journalists because they tend to be quiet. The one thing they do is they consistently back the winning primary candidate (Olsen, 2014). The authors sense that Donald Trump's nomination has largely pitted the Party “very conservative secular” elite and liberal to moderate voters against some “very conservative” evangelical voters (especially those in Southern and border states) and some frustrated “somewhat conservative” voters too, with his core supporters being White, Working Class Men without a college degree, along with some White petit-bourgeoisie men¹².

*Unraveling the Mystery: The Social-Psychological Rage
of a Class Forgotten Swamped by Waves of Change: Analogue
to Digital World, Second to Third Wave Transition and the Great Risk Shift*

The American and global economy has been transformed greatly since the establishment of what commentator Walter Mead termed the “blue state” model of government and market relations in the “second wave” post WWII era. As he states:

In the old system, most blue-collar and white-collar workers held stable, lifetime jobs with defined benefit pensions, and a career civil service administered a growing state as living standards for all social classes steadily rose. Gaps between the classes remained fairly consistent in an industrial economy characterized by strong unions in stable, government-brokered arrangements with large corporations – what Galbraith and others referred to as the Iron Triangle. High school graduates were pretty much guaranteed lifetime employment in a job that provided a comfortable lower middle-class lifestyle; college graduates could expect a better paid and equally secure future.

An increasing “social dividend”, meanwhile, accrued in various forms: longer vacations, more and cheaper state-supported education, earlier retirement, shorter working weeks, more social and literal mobility, and more diverse forms of affordable entertainment. Call all this, taken together, the blue model¹³.

¹¹ H. Olsen & D. Scala, *The four faces of the Republican Party and the fight for the 2016 presidential nomination*, Palgrave/Macmillan, London, 2016.

¹² Nate Silver of FiveThirtyEight had noted the current Republican Party has five factions, Moderate, Establishment, Christian Conservative, Libertarian and Tea Party (anti-Washington, anti-tax faction). See: <http://fivethirtyeight.com/datalab/romney-and-the-gops-five-ring-circus/>

¹³ See: Mead, 2012, n. p.

This model of social-economic organization was followed and extended by governments in Western Europe, and was seen by many as a great improvement over the earlier laissez-faire models that fostered social inequalities and social insecurity. But, as Mead tells us, it is no longer working. In one of the present author's own work (Gilder, 2013), this coming unworkability of the blue social model has been largely driven by growth of what Daniel Bell¹⁴ called the post-industrial society that placed a premium on (salaried or contingent) knowledge workers and what Robert Reich has called symbolic analysts, and less upon unionized factory shop-floor labour. In particular, the analogue-to-digital revolution that occurred in the 1985-1995 period amplified this third-wave transition and it is still occurring. This technological shift had affected both the capitalist West and communist East, forcing or abetting change on industrial, economic, political and social levels of society.

The American Class Divide Grows

After WWII, the “blue social model” Mead described allowed for workers, through unionized semi-skilled factory labour, to achieve a stable lower-middle class life, with modest homes (think Levittown), secure employment contracts, high hourly pay with added overtime pay rates, regular paid vacations, good health insurance, solid defined-benefit pensions and the like. The salaried middle and upper-middle class had marginally better lifestyles (bigger houses, newer, fancier cars) but basically lived in the same social-cultural milieu as the workers did. Basing his observations on his study of two class-based Philadelphia neighborhoods (an upper-class ‘Belmont’ and a lower class ‘Fishtown’) in *Coming Apart* (2012)¹⁵. As Charles Murray states:

As recently as half a century ago [in the early 1960s], Americans across all classes showed only minor differences on the Founding virtues. When Americans resisted the idea of being thought part of an upper class or lower class, they were responding to a reality: there really was such a thing as a civic culture that embraced all of them¹⁶.

Things have changed (for the worse) for the working and middle classes since then, which Murray opines is most seen in the realm of civic and cultural mores:

Today, that is no longer true. Americans have formed a new lower class and a new upper class that have no precedent in our history. American exceptionalism is deteriorating in tandem with this development¹⁷.

The ever-increasing economic divide between blue-collar workers, mid-level clerical (and even upper middle class managers and professionals) and the wealthy classes since the 1980s (driven by neo-liberal economic policies,

¹⁴ D. Bell, *The coming of post-industrial society: A venture in social forecasting*, Basic Books, New York, 1973.

¹⁵ See: C. A. Murray, *Coming apart: The state of white America, 1960-2010*, Crown Forum, New York, N.Y., 2012.

¹⁶ See “Belmont and Fishtown” 2012, n.p.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

analogue to digital technology shift, and the growth of “scalable” world-class competitive professions over “unscalable” community grounded professions, as noted by Gilder, 2013) has called for strong policy responses, both from the political left and right. Being a libertarian, Murray is loath to say that policymakers should follow the extensive social welfare models of Europe in remedying this growing divide, believing that doing so will just accelerate the decline of worthwhile social norms. From the “left” (but not only), there has been increasing calls for the adoption of a basic universal income to be granted to all citizens without exception¹⁸.

On the right, there has been an argument made that the same social ills that affected the African-American community with the introduction of policy responses to poverty under the LBJ administration in 1965 (succinctly outlined by Daniel Patrick Moynihan¹⁹), are now affecting the working class white community, mostly resident in the “rust belt” (formerly heavily industrialized locales in the US Midwest, or in the former textile manufacturing areas in the Eastern coastal regions). As Alec Macgillis and *Propublica* point out (2016), citing Murray and others:

Today, less privileged white Americans are considered to be in crisis, and the language of sociologists and pathologists predominates. Charles Murray’s *Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960–2010* was published in 2012, and Robert D. Putnam’s *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis* came out last year. From opposite ends of the ideological spectrum, they made the case that social breakdown among low-income whites was starting to mimic trends that had begun decades earlier among African Americans: Rates of out-of-wedlock births and male joblessness were rising sharply. Then came the stories about a surge in opiate addiction among white Americans, alongside shocking reports of rising mortality rates (including by suicide) among middle-aged whites²⁰.

The authors of this review state, in contrast to policy writing on the plight of African-Americans and other historically disadvantaged minorities, in which some sympathy was (at least usually) shown to them, policy writing on the plight of the white working class is often marked by a tone of contempt, both from the right and the left. From the right is Kevin Williamson, who has, the reviewers state, “shoveled scorn on the low-income white Republican voters” he sees as “most responsible for the rise of Trump”:

Nothing happened to them. There wasn’t some awful disaster. There wasn’t a war or a famine or a plague or a foreign occupation. Even the economic

¹⁸ Murray himself has been recently drawn to embrace this UBI concept, but only to *replace* all other benefit transfer payments currently extant, such as social security payments to retired people, medical benefits for elderly (Medicare) and poor people (Medicaid), welfare payments to mothers, children and families, etc. See: Murray, C. (n.d.). *The social contract revisited: Guaranteed income as a replacement for the welfare state*. Oxford [UK]: The Foundation for Law, Justice and Society. Retrieved: <http://www.fljs.org/files/publications/Murray.pdf> (accessed 30 November 2016).

¹⁹ United States, & Moynihan, D. P. (1965). *The Negro family. The case for national action*. [by Daniel Patrick Moynihan.]. Washington. Retrieved: <http://web.stanford.edu/~mrosenfe/Moynihan's%20The%20Negro%20Family.pdf> (accessed 30 November 2016).

²⁰ See “The Original Underclass”, Sept. 2016.

changes of the past few decades do very little to explain the dysfunction and negligence – and the incomprehensible malice – of poor white America. So the gypsum business in Garbutt ain't what it used to be. There is more to life in the 21st century than wallboard and cheap sentimentality about how the Man closed the factories down.

The truth about these dysfunctional, downscale communities is that they deserve to die. Economically, they are negative assets. Morally, they are indefensible. Forget all your cheap theatrical Bruce Springsteen crap. Forget your sanctimony about struggling Rust Belt factory towns and your conspiracy theories about the wily Orientals stealing our jobs ... The white American underclass is in thrall to a vicious, selfish culture whose main products are misery and used heroin needles. Donald Trump's speeches make them feel good. So does OxyContin²¹.

Commentators on the left have generally followed the line that the lower-class whites have been suffering from a loss of place in the social hierarchy, because, while they were disadvantaged in the past as compared to other whites, in the past they saw themselves as nonetheless socially above most all African Americans. Maintaining this fiction cost them dearly. As President Lyndon Johnson had remarked, "If you can convince the lowest white man that he's better than the best colored man, he won't notice you're picking his pocket. Hell, give him somebody to look down on, and he'll even empty his pockets for you"²².

This cynical vision of President Johnson's was based upon his political knowledge that, by signing the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (and later the Voting Rights Act of 1965), he was signing the [previously solidly Democratic Party] South over to the Republican Party²³. The troubled election of 1968 proved the case, and pre-figured the rise of Trump. In that election, nominally Democratic Alabama Governor George Wallace ran on a white supremacist "American Independent" ticket, winning five state's electoral votes in the South²⁴. Like Trump, Wallace's electoral focus was the white working class:

²¹ Charles Murray, *Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960–2010*, n. p.

²² See Moyers, 1988.

²³ LBJ's then press secretary, Bill Moyers, describes his courage in pressing so hard for the bill's passage, "The Civil Rights Act of 1964 is to many of us a watershed in American history. With it, blacks gained access to public accommodations across the country. When he signed the act, he was euphoric, but late that very night I found him in a melancholy mood as he lay in bed reading the early edition of *The Washington Post* with headlines celebrating the day. I asked him what was troubling him. „I think we just delivered the South to the Republican party for a long time to come“ (Moyers, "What a Real President was Like"). Wesley Hiers holds a somewhat differing take: "When Lyndon Johnson famously predicted that by signing the Civil Rights Act of 1964 he was signing the South over to the Republican Party for the next 35 years, he was less the [courageous] oracle than the empiricist. Given the growing evidence of the Republican Party's pre-1964 shift to the right on racial policy – to the point of opposing the achievements of 1964-65 between 1960 and 1963 . . . – Johnson in fact had the advantage of predicting that the sun would set as the day was fast approaching dusk (pp. 281-82).

²⁴ The George Wallace entry under "People and Places: 1968 Election" (2000) notes: "In November Wallace carried five states in the Deep South [Ark., La., Miss., Ala. and Ga], but was not able to challenge Nixon in the southern border states as strongly as he had hoped. Nixon and Humphrey ran closely in the popular vote: 43.4 percent for Nixon to 42.7 percent for Humphrey. However, Wallace had come close to Nixon in North Carolina and Tennessee; if he had succeeded in carrying either of those two states, a small shift towards Humphrey in New Jersey or Ohio could have thrown the election into the House of Representatives", an outcome that Wallace believed would have gotten him into the White House. See also: "George Wallace and electoral opposition to civil rights, 1968 Campaign".

Wallace's tirades against hippies, the Supreme Court, and big government, and his ennobling of the white working class – “this man in the textile mill, this man in the steel mill, this barber, this beautician, the policeman on the beat,” as the candidate said in one speech – traveled better than the pundits had predicted. About a month before the election, polls showed that as much as 23 percent of the electorate supported George Wallace for president²⁵.

With Wallace's showing in the 1968 election, which Nixon won, the “Southern Strategy” became extended and successful²⁶. The core of the strategy was to woo formerly solid Democratic Party ethnic white working-class voters to begin to vote Republican, against their economic interest, on the basis of their cultural conservatism on matters of race, morals and mores. This deft move, while increasing the base of voting support for Republican elite policy (and insuring Ronald Reagan's election in 1980 and George Bush Sr. election in 1988), set up an unstable group dynamic in the Party between ultimately irreconcilable interests. By the time George Bush Jr. was elected in 2000, after two terms of Democratic President Bill Clinton, his twin push for a “compassionate conservatism” at home and policy misadventures abroad (the Iraq War and its disastrous aftermath in particular), set the stage for the unstable coalition to fly apart. Combined with a changing national demographic (with ever-growing numbers and influence of minorities in politics and the decline of the white ethnic voting bloc), the election of African-American candidate Barack Obama in 2008 (and his reelection in 2012) fired up the forces of reaction in the Republican Party, especially against its own policy elites (seen as responsible for the financial crash of 2008 domestically and foreign policy failures). First came the “Tea Party” tax revolt and then the Trump revolt. As Jeet Heer (2016) concludes:

The Southern Strategy was the original sin that made Donald Trump possible. If Republican voters were anywhere near as diverse as the Democrats', a candidate like Trump would have been marginalized quickly. Conservative elites can denounce Trump all they want as a “cancer” or an impostor. In truth, he is their true heir, the beneficiary of the policies the party has pursued for more than half a century²⁷.

²⁵ See: “George Wallace, People & Events: 1968 Campaign” 2000.

²⁶ Usually credited to Nixon and his advisers, Jeet Heer places the Southern Strategy's origins with William Buckley and his *National Review* publication, a shift in genteel Northern Republican Party thought dating from 1957, a shift driven by Buckley's Southern family roots and upbringing and by the fear that a push for race equality in the United States would weaken the Republican's anti-Communist resolve. He states that the 1964 campaign of Barry Goldwater is when the Southern Strategy had begun, and that it ended up moving Nixon away from an earlier support of civil rights for African-Americans: “Goldwater's Southern Strategy, inspired by *National Review*, set a pattern for the next half-century – and more. The party had changed so much in 1964 that even Nixon, who had been liberal on civil rights before the Goldwater takeover, adopted the Southern Strategy in 1968 and 1972. Dixie would be the new heartland for the Republican Party, which would stoke white resentment over African-American advances. As the Democratic Party became more multi-racial, winning not just black voters but also Latinos and most non-white immigrants, the Republicans remained an overwhelmingly white party.” (n.p.)

²⁷ Jeet Heer, “How the southern strategy made Donald Trump possible,” *The New Republic*, 2016, n. p., <https://newrepublic.com/article/130039/southern-strategy-made-donald-trump-possible>, accessed 30 November, 2016.

*The Case of Louisiana/Mississippi Floods
as Compared to Hurricane Katrina*

Much as the Katrina hurricane and flooding that destroyed parts of New Orleans at the close of the George Bush, Jr. Presidency served for many as a synecdoche of the crony capitalism and cynical incompetence of political offices (crippled by corrupt embrace of an anti-government mantra by the very people who had the responsibility to manage government) in August 2005²⁸. From the Bipartisan Report, the disaster was described as:

When Hurricane Katrina made landfall near the Louisiana-Mississippi border on the morning of August 29, 2005, it set in motion a series of events that exposed vast numbers of Americans to extraordinary suffering. Not only would Katrina become the most expensive natural disaster in U.S. history, it would also prove to be one of the deadliest.

From the marshes of Louisiana's Plaquemines Parish to the urban center of New Orleans to the coastal communities of Mississippi and Alabama, Katrina cut an enormous swath of physical destruction, environmental devastation, and human suffering²⁹.

And the report did not spare the *in vogue* anti-government mantras of the time from criticism:

What we are left with is a spectacular failure of government. Prior to the flooding of New Orleans, Grover Norquist, President of Americans for Tax Reform and a close associate of indicted lobbyist Jack Abramoff, has publicly stated the following: "I don't want to abolish government. I simply want to reduce it to the size where I can drag it into the bathroom and drown it in the bathtub." It seems he got his wish, at least for the people of New Orleans. Hurricane Katrina should and undoubtedly will force us to reexamine prevalent notions of the market fundamentalists, who are ready and willing to fund any wars the government takes on, but who loathe paying for social programs or public infrastructure. It was under-funding that contributed to the flooding of New Orleans, and to the delinquent response. It may be underfunding that cripples the ability of tens of thousands of residents to return home and rebuild their lives³⁰.

One can argue that the election of Barack Obama in 2008 was aided by the broad finding that the Republican Party elite ideological discourse as represented by Norquist had failed the "real people" of America. On the tenth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, Kenneth Walsh of *US News and World Report*, quotes

²⁸ In the Executive Summary, the report's authors state, "In many respects, our report is a litany of mistakes, misjudgments, lapses, and absurdities all cascading together, blinding us to what was coming and hobbling any collective effort to respond" (p. x).

²⁹ Jeet Heer, "How the southern strategy made Donald Trump possible," *The New Republic*, 2016, n. p., <https://newrepublic.com/article/130039/southern-strategy-made-donald-trump-possible>, accessed 30 November, 2016.

³⁰ K. T. Walsh, "A tale of two storms: Comparing Bush and Obama's hurricane response: How President Obama's handling of Superstorm Sandy compares to Bush's mishandling of Hurricane Katrina", *US News and World Report*, 31 October 2012, p.62, <http://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/ken-walshs-washington/2012/10/31/a-tale-of-two-storms-comparing-bush-and-obamas-hurricane-response>, accessed 5 December 2016.

Democratic pollster Geoff Garin, speaking of President Bush (coming off of a long vacation) simply flying over the disaster scene from 30,000 feet in Air Force One:

“It raised fundamental questions in people’s minds about how in touch he was while there was chaos in people’s lives, and how much he cared about it,” ... “And it raised questions about the basic competence of his administration.” The Federal Emergency Management Agency, was widely blamed for failing to act quickly enough to help those affected by the storm. Yet President Bush, in a vivid example of seeming out of touch, praised FEMA director Michael Brown early in the crisis. “Brownie,” Bush said, “you’re doing a heck of a job.” These words would come back to embarrass Bush when it became clear how badly FEMA had botched its work. (Brown was eventually forced out of his job.³¹)

The racial aspects of the Government’s response (New Orleans is a majority African-American city) was also clearly felt, in that, if a similar catastrophe had befallen a majority white-population city, the immediate response and longer-term aftermath would have been handled very differently. “Summarizing many people’s perceptions of Bush’s performance after Katrina, entertainer Kanye West said, ‘George Bush doesn’t care about black people,’ who were disproportionately the victims of the hurricane. Bush later called this ‘one of the most disgusting moments of my presidency.’ Bush added: ‘He called me a racist. ... I resent it. It’s not true.’ But Katrina remains a blot on Bush’s presidency even today”³².

When President Obama faced a similar situation with Hurricane Sandy in 2012, which hit the northern seaboard and New Jersey specifically, his (and his administration’s) response was contrasted with Bush’s. Kenneth Walsh noted “the contrast couldn’t be much greater: two killer storms, two commanders in chief, two very different responses. President Obama has done well in managing the crisis caused by Hurricane Sandy so far, while President George W. Bush botched the job of handling Hurricane Katrina in 2005.” He continued:

Obama and his Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) have even drawn praise from Republicans such as Govs. Chris Christie of New Jersey and Bob McDonnell of Virginia, both prominent supporters of Republican presidential challenger Mitt Romney. Christie said, “The president has been all over this and he deserves great credit.” McDonnell said the federal response was “incredibly fast and we’re very grateful.” He said Obama has been “direct and personal” in handling the crisis³³.

Kudos for the handling of Hurricane Sandy by President Obama was largely forgotten by the time storms and rain plummeted Louisiana in mid-August 2016, just as the Presidential campaign between Trump and Clinton was heating up after the nominating conventions. When heavy rain and flooding (but not a hurricane) hit parts of Louisiana that was not New Orleans, but areas near Baton Rouge that were populated by a more poor white demographic in August of

³¹ *Ibidem*, n. p.

³² See: K. T. Walsh, “The Undoing of George W. Bush...,” n. p.

³³ *Ibidem*.

2016, much ire was raised by the fact that President Obama was vacationing at Martha's Vineyard, and Hillary Clinton was fundraising there too³⁴. As noted by Rod Dreher on August 29, 2016, a lot of this was due to media inattention in the early days of the flooding:

In Nashville this past weekend, a number of people told me that they're mystified why the national media aren't paying more attention to this massive disaster in Louisiana. It's really disgusting when you're down here, and you're seeing with your own eyes, and hearing with your own ears, how terrible the losses have been and continue to be. But hey, Anthony Weiner's weiner is more important than old Miss Shirley's flooded house. She has bone-on-bone in both shoulders, and her house is probably by now crawling with mold, but she's not a celebrity flasher, so who cares, right³⁵?

In a deft political move, then-candidate Trump visited the flood scene (if only for a few hours) on 19 August, some days before President Obama did (on 23 August). Even as most all praised the speed and competence of the federal disaster relief effort marshaled by the administration in the immediate aftermath of the flooding, a symbolic victory was given to Trump. As noted in "Trump on the Bayou", Dreher observed:

As I've been detailing all week, the people in south Louisiana are seething with anger at the national media for ignoring or downplaying the immensity of the suffering we've been enduring here since the floods started a week ago today [12 August]. And not just at the national media: President Obama has been playing golf all week on Martha's Vineyard while nearly half of Louisiana is underwater, or struggling to make sense of destroyed lives in the wake of the flood. He hasn't said diddly about it, nor, except for one tweet, has Hillary Clinton, despite her big talk at the Democratic convention about how we're all stronger together. She (or rather, her staff) found it more compelling to tweet about US women gold medal winners in Rio than tens of thousands of Louisianans now homeless.

I have not seen a poll, obviously, but anecdotally, I can tell you that lots of people here are furious at elites in the national media and in national politics, and I'm talking liberal Democrats here in the Bayou State too. The broad feeling is that we don't matter to them, that we are just a bunch of rednecks and coonasses and country people in flyover country whose problems are far less interesting than Donald Trump's tweets and Ryan Lochte's misdemeanors. Trump has been part of this dynamic too in the past week, more preoccupied with his self-demeaning, pissy fight with the media than in paying attention to the country he supposedly wants to govern³⁶.

³⁴ As the Red Cross described it, "Thousands of people in Louisiana have lost everything they own and need our help now," said Brad Kieserman, vice president, Disaster Services Operations and Logistics for the Red Cross. "This disaster is the worst to hit the United States since Superstorm Sandy and we anticipate it will cost at least \$30 million, a number which may grow as we learn more about the scope and magnitude of the devastation" ("Needs of People in Louisiana Remain Great", American Red Cross Press Release [2016, 17 August] n. p.).

³⁵ See: "What Matters To Media", n. p.

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

He continues, saying that Trump turned the perception of these people around with his short visit:

But unlike the president or Hillary Clinton, Donald Trump is here today, viewing the devastation and visiting with victims and relief workers. Donald Trump is at present not in a position to do anything other than write a personal check for relief work. If he were president, as a bureaucratic matter, he probably couldn't do much more than what Barack Obama is doing, which is to open the floodgates of federal disaster aid. But as a presidential candidate, he has done something much appreciated, besides bringing the media down here to show the rest of the country more of what we're dealing with: *he has shown us respect* (emphasis added)³⁷.

In a follow-up blog post, Dreher points to *Wall Street Journal* columnist Peggy Noonan's, who stated in "How Global Elites Forsake Their Countrymen," that the global elites in government, business, entertainment, etc. have lost touch with the nation-state citizens they are supposed to represent, in some form or fashion:

The larger point is that this is something we are seeing all over, the top detaching itself from the bottom, feeling little loyalty to it or affiliation with it. It is a theme I see working its way throughout the West's power centers. At its heart it is not only a detachment from, but a lack of interest in, the lives of your countrymen, of those who are not at the table, and who understand that they've been abandoned by their leaders' selfishness and mad virtue-signalling [sic]... . From what I've seen of those in power throughout business and politics now, the people of your country are not your countrymen, they're aliens whose bizarre emotions you must attempt occasionally to anticipate and manage³⁸.

Construing the Social, Political and Moral Divides: The 'Big Sort' Across America

How did this disconnect happen between the elites and the common people in the USA? One could point to the systematic disparagement of concepts like the "public good" in the USA in the last forty-plus years, where economic conceptions elevating the notion of the "private sphere" as being more customer-focused and efficient than supposedly sclerotic public/government institutions. It then came to be accepted conventional wisdom over time that promotion of the "private sphere" was *ipso facto*, a "good thing" and Smithean notions of the "invisible hand" became second-nature, even among supposed social democratic parties. As noted above, the rise of ideologically grounded "think tanks" in Washington played a vital part, as did the abandonment of the "fairness doctrine" in US broadcasting law. In the end, one saw the growing commodification of knowledge, of intellectual property, as a largely private, often corporate good, that could wall off large sections of the public cognitive sphere, just as actual

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

³⁸ See "Populism And The Great Flood", n.p.

public squares in communities were also reduced via a growth in private space shopping malls, homeowner associations and individual properties, i.e., gated communities. As argued in *The Big Sort*, Bishop confirms the growing divide between Murray's 'Belmont' and 'Fishtown,' with statistics that indicate that the US population is living in locales that are more and more segregated by income, education, and profession. In "The Political Parties Have Sorted" Morris Fiorina follows the thread begun by Bishop, saying that US citizens now sort by political Party affiliation, due to not just demographic and SES sorting by voters, but more and more *partisan sorting* by Party activists since the 1970s:

What people are actually seeing, however, is different [from recent geographic sorting], albeit real and important: the consequences of *partisan sorting* that has been going on for nearly five decades. This sorting process flies in the face of long-standing political science generalizations about parties in countries like the United States that have single-member districts and majoritarian electoral rules, contrasted with parties in countries that have proportional electoral rules, like most European democracies. For decades, both theory and empirical research concluded that countries with majoritarian electoral rules tended to have two broad-based parties, often termed "catch-all" parties, whereas countries with proportional electoral rules tended to have more than two parties, all of which had clear ideological hues. As Clinton Rossiter wrote about the United States in a standard 1960s political parties textbook, "[T]here is and can be no real difference between the Democrats and the Republicans, because the unwritten laws of American politics demand that the parties overlap substantially in principle, policy, character, appeal, and purpose – or cease to be parties with any hope of winning a national election." The validity of this conventional wisdom was shown by the electoral drubbings suffered by Republican Barry Goldwater, who gave the country "a choice, not an echo" in 1964, and Democrat George McGovern, who did the same with a similar result in 1972³⁹.

But now, this following pertains, according to Fiorina (2016):

By the turn of the [21st] century, however, a new conventional wisdom had taken hold, one which asserted that the public had polarized and elections were now about maximizing the turnout of the "base," not about appealing to centrist voters – because the latter had virtually disappeared. As the previous essay showed, that conclusion is unwarranted. We can argue about the size of the middle, which depends on how we define it (whether in terms of ideology, partisanship, or specific issues), but, however defined, once we settle on a definition the data do not show any decline in its size. Rather, what is true today is that the middle has no home in either party. Political parties in the United States have come to resemble parties in proportional electoral systems. A process of sorting during the past several decades has resulted in a Democratic Party that is clearly liberal and a Republican Party that is clearly conservative⁴⁰.

³⁹ Morris P. Fiorina, "The Political Parties Have Sorted", 2016, p. 2. Retrieved: http://www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/research/docs/fiorina_3_finalfile.pdf

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

Following upon this is an added complication/division, that is (according to MSNBC commentator Christopher Hayes), one could say a major split that transcends the extant two political parties in the USA is a split driven by a corrosive loss of ‘trust’ in all the main pillars of society: politics, economics, education, culture, church and even sports. Hayes calls the divide as one between “institutionalists” and “insurrectionists.”⁴¹ In the Democratic primaries, Clinton was the institutionalist and Bernie Sanders was the insurrectionist; in the Republican primaries, personalities such as Jeb Bush and Marco Rubio were the exemplars of institutionalists, and Trump was the insurrectionist par excellence⁴².

Turning to our moral divide, in “Communication Ethics as Tolerance, Understanding and Unity” (1991) communication scholar Karen Joy Greenberg notes that “contemporary Western epistemology is ontologically limited in that it is ethnocentric in nature. Only self-generated premises are valid in this worldview. The resulting tautology provides Western epistemology with a vital force, but simultaneously makes suspect this epistemology[’s] suitability as a perspective for analyzing and evaluating incommensurate moral orders. . . . Ironically, contemporary Western epistemology’s emotion-based system of values conflicts with its logic-based system of proofs. As a result, this epistemology yields a moral order based on dogma” (pp. 87-88). What we have seen as noted by the several sources noted above, there is a growing divide in America between two more-and-more distinct, dogmatic moral orders. Jonathan Haidt noted the distinction as well, in which the technocratic left is grounded on the twin pillars of “do no harm” and “fairness”, while the conservative slide, while incorporating those value pillars into their framework nonetheless often favor group loyalty and deference to traditional authority within an honor code⁴³. Add this divide to the political distinction of institutionalist and insurrectionist as described by Hayes, and one can see how difficult it will be to unify US political discourse in the coming age of Trump, especially with the current lack of trust, traditionally granted to mediating institutions (scientific, cultural and educational institutions, and the press most obviously). As we have seen Obama (and then Clinton) ‘derangement syndrome’ on the Fishtown insurrectionist right, we now have Trump ‘derangement syndrome’ appearing on the Belmont institutionalist center and left.

A broader construing of these two syndromes had been provided by theologian Jürgen Moltmann (1999), under the nomenclature of ‘the conservative syndrome’ and ‘the progressive syndrome.’ As Gilder (2012) outlined them, the first “is based upon the ‘negative anthropology’ of a ‘chaotic’ individual. It thus calls forth monistic conceptions of a strong state defined by adherence to ‘monotheism,

⁴¹ C. Hayes, *Twilight of the elites: America after meritocracy*, New York: Broadway Books, 2013.

⁴² Many have remarked that Trump the insurrectionist basically caught the ideologically hollowed-out Republic Party apparatus flatfooted, and was able to then stage a ‘hostile takeover’ of the Party via rallying its long-disaffected stakeholder/shareholders to vote for him in the primary elections, which could not be directly controlled by the Party’s elites.

⁴³ J. Haidt, *The righteous mind: Why good people are divided by politics and religion*, New York: Pantheon, 2012.

monarchy and monogamy,” while the second “is based upon a ‘positive anthropology’ of a naturally good, ‘enlightened’ individual deformed by social pathologies. It is based on pluralism/multiculturalism, limited-state constitutionalism and mutual partnership.” The conservative syndrome, according to Moltmann, looks towards a pessimistic future marked by “the end of the world in a ‘final battle’ or Armageddon marked by ‘divisions, severances and decrees’” which can only be held back or delayed “by a strict maintenance of the ‘present [traditional] order,’” until God ends history with a division of the saved from the damned. The progressive syndrome, conversely, looks towards a future that can be managed, but is lacking vision of anything qualitatively better. As Gilder (2012) notes, “incremental improvements of social conditions will (ideally) occur” but no future utopia is either “promised or possible”. Therefore, “people will be existentially alone in ‘perfect freedom,’ with the burden to each create their own ‘self’ (as in Musil’s *Man without Qualities*). This *posthistorie* will be, [in Moltmann’s words], ‘as tranquil as it is tedious’.” Yet neither of these syndromes deals with several pink elephants in “the current scene,” which “is marked by: “‘Surplus people’ nobody wants and nobody needs’; increasing debt; and ecological decline.” Paralleling Boulding, Moltmann’s is describing the overtaking of benevolent appreciating systems by a malevolent, deteriorating system, because, while the conservative syndrome seeks to *blockade* alternative visions of the future, the progressive syndrome seeks the *repression* of any alternative visions of the future by ever-extending the reach of the pragmatic present⁴⁴.

As Dan O’Sullivan in “Vengeance is Mine” argued (after the shocking election result that voted candidate Trump in despite most all predictions), the voters “reasons” for voting for Trump ran over all the usual frustrations and finesse, across most all demographics. The one big commonality was no one liked the “pragmatic present” however (seemingly) rational it was to sustain it: Many Trump voters went for him for simple reasons that ran a gamut: they didn’t know what else to do, they were fearful, they were entitled, they were angry and embittered, they were racist and malicious, they were confused and without malice, they were ignorant, they were not ignorant – they do not accept life in America as it is today, and they will vote, if courted, for the one guy willing to walk through life as a six foot upraised middle finger to everything known and despised. Maybe some of his promises will come true – and failing that, at least we sent a big “fuck you” up the flagpole⁴⁵.

To close this section with Boulding (1971), Gilder would argue that the “payoff system” has not worked for most of the (ever-growing and varied) non-elites in the USA for quite some time, and therefore, many of their members were willing (for a variety of reasons or motivations) to go for a risky casino win

⁴⁴ J. Moltmann, “The Liberation of the future and its anticipations in history,” in Bauckham, R. (ed.), *God will be all in all: The eschatology of Jürgen Moltmann*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999, 277-78 .

⁴⁵ D. O’Sullivan, “Vengeance is mine,” *Jacobin: Reason in revolt* (Blog 18 November 2016). Retrieved: <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/11/donald-trump-election-hillary-clinton-election-night-inequality-republicans-trumpism/>, accessed 6 December 2016.

in voting for Trump, because, even if their lives will not improve under Trump, they do feel that the hated class(es) that they believe seeks to control their future will have it worse than they will. The one hope he has today is that the caution Boulding gave, that the trajectory distinction between appreciating and deteriorating systems can be of a small degree. He hopes after the large shock of November 8th, we can each seek to find small ways to individually move the “arc of history” towards a humane future even while our economic and political system has failed us all, in multifaceted ways.

*On Attempting to (Super)forecast
the 2016 Presidential Election Results*

The background that inspired author Eastman’s current line of inquiry regarding the 2016 US elections was his work in geopolitical forecasting for the Good Judgment Project. The stimulus for the Good Judgment Project was the failure to adequately make the links to thwart the 9/11 attacks, as well as the intelligence failures (Weapons of Mass Destruction – WMD) leading up to the Iraq War, that highlighted the limits of the Intelligence Community to adequately forecast critical events. The US Intelligence Community, including the CIA was looking for a way: ... to dramatically enhance the accuracy, precision, and timeliness of intelligence forecasts for a broad range of event types, through the development of advanced techniques that elicit, weight, and combine the judgments of many intelligence analysts⁴⁶.

This led to an approach based on the ‘wisdom of the crowds’, to determine if a diverse group of educated and motivated people with access only to open source information could gain insights as well as a higher degree of accuracy, than highly trained subject matter experts within the intelligence community. The Aggregative Contingency Estimate project (ACE) was: ... designed to test the best strategies of making intuitive probability judgments. Individuals from five university-based research programs competed to develop innovative methods of assigning probability estimates to high-impact events around the globe. Illustrative questions included the following: Who will be the president of Russia in 2012? Will North Korea detonate another nuclear weapon in the next 3 months? How many refugees will flee Syria next year? How fast will China’s economy grow next quarter? Questions were not chosen by researchers but by IARPA, and they were ecologically representative of the challenges of intelligence analysis, with one key exception each question had to pass the clairvoyance test (written clearly enough as to leave no room for ex post facto quarrels over what really happened and who was right)⁴⁷.

ACE was a research project sponsored by the U.S. Intelligence Advanced Research Projects Activity (IARPA) – Office of the Director of National Intelligence

⁴⁶ J. Matheny & S. Rieber, “Aggregative Contingent Estimation (ACE)”, *Intelligence Advanced Research Projects Agency*, 2015. Retrieved: <https://www.iarpa.gov/index.php/research-programs/ace>, accessed 30 August 2015, n. p.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*.

(ODNI), based at the Wharton School, and Psychology Department, at the University of Pennsylvania, and the Haas School of Business at the University of California, Berkeley. At first as a research subject, Eastman forecasted geopolitical events with the goal of dramatically enhancing the accuracy, precision, and timeliness of forecasts for a broad range of events. Forecasters individually placed probabilistic values for future events and the researchers combined the results with proprietary methods for improving forecasts. He was ranked in the top two percent of the forecasters, and thus earned the distinction of “Superforecaster”. Superforecasters were reportedly thirty percent more accurate than intelligence officers (Ignatius, 2013), though they lacked their access to actual classified information. This group worked only with access to open-source information, in teams with diverse backgrounds ranging from financial analysts and political scientists, to a marine archeologist, an epidemiologist, a pharmacist as well as a couple of artists. They forecast geopolitical events ranging from the details of war, macroeconomic indicators, and climate change. In almost any area where human involvement played a role in the outcome, this group was more accurate than the professional subject matter experts and the best computer models. Even with success, they had (and have) limits and never reached “crystal ball” status.

Before forecasting tournaments, it was not certain if people were able to make consistent and reliable geopolitical forecasts. The research of Philip Tetlock, explained in his 2005 book, *Expert Political Judgment: How Good is It? How Can We Know?*, Tetlock attacked the idea that subject matter experts and pundits were better than random chance at forecasting. His work expanded on Isaiah Berlin’s classic (1953) essay “The Hedgehog and the Fox” categorizing people as either hedgehogs, who know one thing very well and see the world through that prism, or as Foxes, who have many experiences and a wide knowledge base. Foxes fare much better in probabilistic forecasting.

Even if groups such as this attain better accuracy in forecasting, the ability to accurately communicate the results is still problematic. In 1951, Sherman Kent was stunned by his revelation that diligent research and analysis results were getting lost at the level of information transfer. Sherman Kent worked for the CIA in Research and Analysis for creating National Intelligence Estimates (NIE), the most rigorous form of forecasting and analysis, created for the consumption up to the Executive level (President of the United States). He was startled to discover the disconnection between what the writers of the Estimates intended, and how the recipients perceived the risks implied by the reports.

The challenge was describing varying degrees of uncertainty with words that conveyed the same meaning to the consumer of the report (Kent, 1964):

The briefing officer was reporting a photo reconnaissance mission.

Pointing to the map, he made three statements:

1. “And at this location there *is* a new airfield. [He could have located it to the second on a larger map.] Its longest runway is 10,000 feet.”

2. “It is *almost certainly* a military airfield.”

3. “The terrain is such that the Blanks could easily lengthen the runways, otherwise improve the facilities, and incorporate this field into their system of strategic staging bases. It is *possible* that they will.” Or, more daringly, “It would be logical for them to do this *and sooner or later they probably will.*”

The first is as close as one can come to a statement of indisputable fact. It describes something knowable and known with a high degree of certainty. The reconnaissance aircraft’s position was known with precision and its camera reproduced almost exactly what was there.

The second is a judgment or estimate. It describes something which is knowable in terms of the human understanding but not precisely known by the man who is talking about it. There is strong evidence to sustain his judgment: the only aircraft on the field are military aircraft, many are parked in reverted hardstands, the support area has all the characteristics of similar known military installations, and so on. Convincing as it is, this evidence is circumstantial. It cannot justify a flat assertion that this is a military airfield. It makes the case, say, 90 percent of the way. And some sort of verbal qualifier is necessary to show that the case is a 90-percenter, not a 100. This is why the briefer said “*almost certainly.*”

The third statement is another judgment or estimate, this one made almost without any evidence direct or indirect. It may be an estimate of something that no man alive can know, for the Blanks may not yet have made up their minds whether to lengthen the runways and build up the base. Still the logic of the situation as it appears to the briefer permits him to launch himself into the area of the literally unknowable and make this estimate.

This initial discussion moved from the hypothetical to the deeply consequential, once national security interests became involved:

In March 1951 appeared NIE 29-51, “Probability of an Invasion of Yugoslavia in 1951. The following was its key judgment, made in the final paragraph of the Conclusions: “Although it is impossible to determine which course the Kremlin is likely to adopt, we believe that the extent of Satellite military and propaganda preparations indicates that an attack on Yugoslavia in 1951 *should be considered a serious possibility.*”

A few days after the estimate appeared, I was in informal conversation with the Policy Planning Staff’s chairman. We spoke of Yugoslavia and the estimate. Suddenly he said, “By the way, what did you people mean by the expression ‘serious possibility’? What kind of odds did you have in mind?” I told him that my personal estimate was on the dark side, namely, that the odds were around 65 to 35 in favor of an attack. He was somewhat jolted by this; he and his colleagues had read “serious possibility” to mean odds very considerably lower. Understandably troubled by this want of communication, I began asking my own colleagues on the Board of National Estimates what odds they had had in mind when they agreed to that wording. It was another jolt to find that each Board member had had somewhat different odds in mind and the low man was thinking of about 20 to 80, the high of 80 to 20. The rest ranged in between.

What we were trying to do was just what my Policy Planning friend had assumed, namely to quote odds on this or that being the case or taking place in

the future. There is a language for odds; in fact there are two – the precise mathematical language of the actuary or the race track bookie and a less precise though useful verbal equivalent. We did not use the numbers, however, and it appeared that we were misusing the words⁴⁸.

Following this revelation, the CIA created a system with seven verbal gradations of probability including the representation of 100% certainty and 0% impossibility. Though a precise vocabulary was given for each gradation, it was not always used in practice. In comparison, both the Good Judgment Project and Good Judgment Inc. instituted precise 1% numeric forecasts from 0 to 100. Superforecasters proved a granularity of 5%, or 21 gradations of accuracy in their results. This meant that if their numeric forecasts were rounded beyond 5%, the accuracy over a large number of questions declined, but statistically, 5% gradations were their limit of precision. This was not the case with the general population.

General Methodology for Forecasting (commentary on the 2016 elections)

Our Superforecaster group first set out to establish a *baserate* by looking at how similar types of questions have resolved themselves in the past. Regarding US Presidential elections, the party that was in power for two terms, is more likely to lose the election. If the economy is on the decline, the incumbent party is also likely to lose. A charismatic candidate who can speak to the masses, as opposed to only the elites, has an advantage. Statistical data can be derived for each of these characteristics by looking at previous US elections. An aggregation of the factors yields an initial forecast that may then be heuristically adapted as a result of applying intangible factors.

Superforecasters are *Bayesian* (frequent belief updaters). This is also referred to as being agnostic, or not married to an idea or set of facts. As facts and information change, so do the forecasts. A challenge is to update but not overreact. Over the course of the elections, new revelations occurred with incredible frequency. The challenge was to judge whether each piece of information substantively changed the results of the election. Three critical components to US elections are voter intent, voter turnout, and whether any significant shifts occur in the crucial swing states.

Black Swans (Nassim Taleb) or at least gray swans are events that are very rare, but possible. It is necessary to imagine events and results that are outside of the normal realm of possibilities to not get caught off guard. This year the shift in quantity and acceptance of fake news from social media as well as Russian hacking of the Democratic National Committee was events that knowledge of past elections would not have foreseen. It was very known that both Clinton and

⁴⁸ S. Kent, "Words of estimative probability," *Studies in Intelligence* (Fall). Langley [VA]: Central Intelligence Agency, 1964. Retrieved: <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/books-and-monographs/sherman-kent-and-the-board-of-national-estimates-collected-essays/6words.html>, accessed 31 October, 2016.

Trump had a lot of baggage, but the Access Hollywood sexual assault tape as well as FBI Director Comey's re-opening an investigation into Hillary Clinton's e-mail, both in the last month of the election, were unusually severe surprises⁴⁹.

Technicalities need to be understood to ascertain their effect on the outcome. In the case of the US Presidential election, the Electoral College is a technical issue that has now given the election to the candidate who lost the popular vote in 2 of the last 5 elections. There are typically only a small number of swing states that are in play, with the rest so solidly Democrat or Republican as to not be competitive. Third Party candidates are another contingency that can destabilize the balance. This was likely the case this year, but unprovable. At the time of this writing, Hillary Clinton's lead in the popular vote is in excess of 2.8 million people, or more than 2% of the total vote⁵⁰.

Granularity refers to how precise a forecast is. Four weeks before the election, with Trump being an extremely undisciplined candidate and the Access Hollywood sexual assault tape just uncovered, the prevailing view (including my own mistaken view), was that it would be nearly impossible for Trump to win. By counting all of the groups that he had offended (women, ethnic and religious minorities, morally conservative voters), it appeared that the best he could hope for was around 40% of the vote.

Employing a *diverse group of highly numerate* Superforecasters with a resistance to groupthink and varied backgrounds, in terms of geography, employment, beliefs and education, serves as an inoculation from extreme views and as a multiplier for gathering and processing information. A major challenge in the 2016 Presidential election as well as Brexit, was that the voting was split heavily down lines of degree of higher education. Nearly a third of Superforecaster's have PhD's, and if you include Law and Master's degrees, the number is well over 50%. The percentage that attended elite universities is also very disproportionate to the average population. This problem also extends to pundits and political scientists. The resistance to a candidate who did not feel bound by truth or logic was profound in this group, where a significant portion of the general population was not concerned with the details, but simply wanted a change from what they saw as the country going in the wrong direction. Trump, though born rich and educated at elite schools, had a populist message and hammered the simple strong slogans "Make America Great Again" and "Crooked Hillary" so many times that truth gave way to perception. The campaigns of both Brexit and Trump, helped propel "post-truth" to become the word of the year for the Oxford

⁴⁹ The Hatch Act of 1939 prohibits Federal employees from engaging in partisan political activity through their official work. It was not a surprise that there would be e-mail hacks, or other attempts to discredit Hillary Clinton in the final weeks of the election, but it was both a surprise and a potentially illegal act for the director of the FBI to announce publicly announce an investigation so close to the election that had no evidence of wrongdoing on the part of Clinton. He felt that if he did not announce it and subsequently damaging evidence would have been revealed, he would have been faulted for his silence.

⁵⁰ As of the 7th of December, 2016, Hillary Clinton had a total of 65, 534, 951 votes to Trump's 62, 858, 281 votes, yet he was decisively ahead in Electoral College votes, and thus in line to be the next President of the United States.

English dictionary. Post Truth is defined as “relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.” As much as analysts and pundits try to put themselves into the mindset of people for who have not benefited from a growing economy, cultural liberalization, and increased technological innovation, the ability to fully understand the frustration of those left behind is a challenge.

Red Teaming is a deliberate step to assign a group of analysts/forecasters to research and comment about positions that go against the prevailing view. In the case of the Presidential elections, that simply began with considering the possibility that Trump could win, at the beginning of the campaign and then imagining scenarios where he would be victorious. Once this psychological barrier had been passed, it was necessary to continually look for polls as well as anecdotal evidence regarding his strengths, Clinton’s weaknesses, as well as unforeseen circumstances that could lead to his success. Red team information must regularly be shared with the entire group of forecasters, and presented in a credible manner.

Question Clusters are a series of forecastable questions whose aggregated responses help give a fuller picture of the key question, and allow for a more accurate forecast. In the case of the US Presidential elections, questions that give guidance about the state of the economy range from the interest rate set by the Federal Reserve Open Market Committee, job growth, inflation, consumer spending, to the price of oil (OPEC production quotas), are essential to understanding voter sentiment. Foreign policy is typically less important to US voters than the economy, except where it plays into fears of terrorism or the outsourcing of jobs. The possibility of terrorists attacks (and their intensity) in Europe and the US, migration flows, as well as economic indicators were all areas external to the candidates that formed a relevant question cluster.

A respectful forum without *ad hominem* attacks is essential for forecasting in a group environment. The internet is a good example where either people exist in echo chambers of likeminded voters, or engage in truly destructive rants. Even though researchers and forecasters are trained to attack an idea and not the person, the emotions regarding a candidate who possessed views that in Eastman’s opinion are an existential risk to the core values of what America should aspire to be, made it extremely challenging to be open to hear from “the other side”.

*Critical Issues in the 2016 Election: Job loss as a result
of globalization and technological innovation*

During the campaign, Trump blamed China and Mexico, as well as bad trade deals for job loss. There is merit to his claim that some jobs have been outsourced to Mexico and China, but his promise to impose stiff penalties for exporting jobs, and heavy import tariffs to bring jobs back to America, is unrealistic as a net job creator. This protectionism would likely result in a net

loss of jobs due to trade wars, but it represented a radical change from the status quo to people who were fed-up. Technology and changing realities have a greater impact on job loss and the shift towards lower paid jobs. The coal industry is in a downward spiral both because of environmental legislation and due to plentiful, relatively inexpensive, and comparatively cleaner natural gas.

Technology and new ways of organizing work have revolutionized the American factory since the Golden Age of the 1980s. Today, U.S. factories produce twice as much as they did in 1984, but with one-third fewer workers. The number of jobs in the manufacturing sector has declined by about 5 million since 2000, falling from 17.3 million at the turn of the century to 12.3 million in 2015. (Nutting, 2016)

The American auto industry is innovative, with companies such as Tesla inventing and manufacturing electric and self-driving cars, but their plants increasingly need fewer employees to maximize profit. This is an unpleasant reality that voters generally did not want to hear. Scapegoating is easier.

Immigration

Immigration taps into the fear of terrorism, a Nativist desire to keep the country the way it was (Great Again – or white again?), the anger of jobs being taken away, and the feeling that Christian America is under assault. Trump took a very anti-immigrant tone and proposed plans that will never happen, such as his massive wall with Mexico, and a complete ban of Muslims, but they codified the general loss of control that many people had, and presented an answer. Clinton's proposal to let in some Syrian immigrants was on a per capita scale that was eighty times less than the number Germany let in in 2015, but it still created fear and a false equivalency with the worst terrorism and cultural problems of Germany France and Belgium.

Displeasure with Washington and the ruling 1%

Candidate Clinton already was part of Government, so it was difficult to counter the challenge that she was part of the problem, an insider. She made amplified this perception by spending an inordinate amount of time at high dollar fundraisers as opposed to mixing with the common people. Her frequent use of celebrities at her rallies may have made for a good party, but compounded the perception of a person out of touch with the common person. Both Clinton and Trump are rich, but he managed to carry a populist message in a similar but more extreme way than George W. Bush managed. Bush was wealthy and entitled, but acted as a cowboy who wanted to spend time on his ranch. This resonated with the average American, helping to make him appear as a man of the people. Trump's red Make America Great Again hat looked ridiculous to me, especially when worn with a suit and tie, but this style of hat is typical for a farmer, and helped connect with the working class.

Racial conflict

The prevailing view after Presidential candidate Mitt Romney's loss in 2012 was that the Republican party had to reinvent itself to become more inclusive of minorities, since they are a fast growing segment of the population. Trump took a contrarian view, either as a calculated move or it may be just because it is who he is. The Electoral College made it unnecessary for him to receive a majority of the vote, but rather to get a majority in the states that mattered (swing states). Blue collar and rural areas voted overwhelmingly for Trump. He never had much hope getting minority votes, so by doubling down on racial divisions, he didn't increase the type of voters that would support him, but insured that he would energize his base (core supporters) to go vote.

Terrorism

Terrorism is extraordinarily hard to catch 100% of the time, but the feeling of insecurity was amplified by the impotence of the US to positively influence and gain from the turmoil in the Middle East (Iraq, Iran, Libya, Syria, Egypt) as well as at the ability to prevent attacks on the homefront. Trump's tough talk about bombing ISIS without giving any specifics, appealed to a basic desire to act. Clinton was burdened with a foreign policy record that could be attacked (Benghazi) as opposed to Trump who had no record. This is another case where it is not essential to have a plan in the minds of many voters, but simply to not be seen as a continuation of a broken plan.

Lack of trust in political leaders and institutions

In a post-truth world, facts are less important than a general feeling that a leader shares your basic views. Clinton did have times where she was not honest, but Trump was pathological in comparison. His supporters were not bothered by this because they didn't believe that he was speaking in facts, but rather in general directions that agreed with their world view. We are shifting to a post-truth world where social media and fake news sites can give any view or false set of facts and conspiracy theories that to confirm a given point of view. Politicians can then cite these articles with few repercussions if they are later proven false, as long as they are false in the direction their constituency supports.

Overton Window shift

The Overton Window has made a quantum shift in the realm of what are now politically acceptable behaviors. Trump won the Electoral College and Republicans have control of both the House and the Senate. This would imply that there was a landslide victory. There wasn't. Trump currently is trailing Clinton in the popular vote by 2.8 million people. More people cast votes for Democratic Senators than Republicans, but Republicans gained more seats. It is only in the House of

Representatives that Republicans won a majority both in reality *and* by the popular vote. The reality is that the Republicans now control the Legislative and Executive branches of government and will likely have the chance to significantly shift the balance on the Supreme Court.

Regardless of the number of votes for Democrats, the shift has still occurred because of the number of taboos that have been decimated this year. Criticism based on race, sex, religion, and disability were not disqualifying. Speaking of sexual assault, lying compulsively even when the lies are verifiable, condoning violence against dissenters, and having no serious grasp of foreign policy or even desire to study and learn are now permissible. How much of this is a visceral reaction against Clinton vs. a permanent shift will require more than one election to determine. The role of Russia and hackers in influencing the election is another first, and is more disturbing because Trump challenged Russia to hack Clinton's server, without paying a significant political cost. "The CIA has concluded in a secret assessment that Russia intervened in the 2016 election to help Donald Trump win the presidency, rather than just to undermine confidence in the U.S. electoral system, according to officials briefed on the matter" (Entous et al., 9 December 2016). At the time of this writing, the Electoral College has not yet officially voted (it is due to do so on 19 December, 2016), but the election has already taken place, so the damage done by outside (Russian) forces, is nearly impossible to reverse.

Conclusion: Forecasting lessons learned (post-mortem)

Overconfidence for Clinton based on the belief that Trump was unelectable may be the greatest lesson. Don't underestimate the radical right in a period of global shifting to the right. The shift to the right is a natural reaction to an increasingly destabilized world order. The lack of a clear mandate makes me hesitant to draw too strong of conclusions, but that a candidate like Trump, who is such an iconoclast, and had insulted the vast majority of the public, could even come close to winning the popular vote, is a warning that should be heeded. The over-reliance on polls in politically tumultuous years is a significant factor. The aggregation of polls has traditionally been the one of the best methods for predicting elections in established democracies, but with a revolutionary figure and great public dissatisfaction with both candidates, it is not dispositive.

We are entering a time of increased difficulty in forecasting elections in both the US and Europe, because of a paradigm shift. The possibility for closely contested elections to be decided by a single catastrophic event as well as a move away from mainstream media to totally unregulated social media forums, has changed the dynamics and increased the possibilities for candidates outside of the mainstream to prevail.

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