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The Meaning, Causes, and Possible Results of the 2016 Presidential Election

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Abstract: Donald Trump owes his election to post-1972 changes in party institutions and economic developments that were largely the result of presidential policies supported by both parties. Political scientists and pundits who relied on survey data and assumptions about motives and character of Trump supporters failed to understand the deep causes of the 2016 election outcome, and to inform the public and party leaders about strategic and coalition options for the future. Focusing on expressive protest and labeling are probably antithetical to party reorganization leading to genuine reform and reduction in inequality.

Introduction

Academic and media commentators have been, since Donald Trump's rise in late 2015, preoccupied with the choice of words to describe him and his supporters. But most of the language and many of the assumptions behind it have been inaccurate and antithetical to analysis, understanding, and party strategy. The US has a rich political history, and its own appropriate political metaphors; there is no need to reach for analogies in other cultures. Trump is not a fascist;¹ nor is he a "populist" if those terms are used with any historical accuracy, although he *could* be said to resemble a demagogue from the American past like George Wallace. At the level of *state* politics, there has been no dearth of demagogues.²

¹ The fascist analogy was as ubiquitous as the populist label. See Peter Baker, "Rise of Donald Trump Tracks Growing Debate Over Global Fascism," *New York Times* (NYT), May 28, 2016. Other scholars quoted by Baker prefer "illiberal democracy," or "right-wing populist nationalism," even though historical American Populists are not accurately described as "nationalists." They embraced free trade and tried to recruit immigrant workers.

² State one-party systems with restricted electorates gave us an array of demagogues, like Mississippi, South Carolina, and Alabama governors James Vardaman, Theodore Bilbo, Cole Blease and George Wallace. Edward L. Jackson, the Republican governor of Indiana elected in 1924 at the peak of the KKK revival was another example of the genre. George Wallace ran as

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But no fascist, by any plausible definition of that term, has ever become a major contender for the presidency. And such labels do not offer much enlightenment about why the nomination system in 2016 produced such a remarkable candidate, and why there was such an inversion of traditional class patterns in the general election vote.

Donald Trump's victory, it will be argued here, was a result of regime dynamics and post-1970s institutional change – particularly change in *party* rules, strategies, and coalitions – and economic change that was in large part a result of a quarter century of party policies. The best tools and theories for understanding the rise of Trump can be found in the scholarship and methods of American political development (APD) and socioeconomic analysis. Trump was a resourceful candidate, consumed by ambition and insecurity,³ who threw himself into presidential politics and found an audience with serious, unaddressed grievances that saw no alternative political champion after the defeat of Bernie Sanders. Trump's success, then, was a result of institutional change interacting with economic distress, with its greatest resonance within the party that had inherited, after 1980, much of the White working class. What must be recognized, however, is that elites in both parties had ignored the distress of a substantial segment of the population, until it finally erupted in open revolt in 2015–2016. Unfortunately, there was little effort in the Democratic Party leadership or mainstream national media – two institutions that have become increasingly intertwined – to understand the forces that produced Trump. Labeling is not a substitute for analysis in

an independent in the national presidential race of 1968, and for the Democratic presidential nomination under the new rules in 1972; He had also run in a few primaries in 1964. Though he did relatively well as a third party candidate in 1968 (13.5%), the new primary system offered him a chance to capture a major party. He tried again in 1972, and again did well in the South and a few northern industrial states, but his campaign ended when he was shot just before the Maryland and Michigan primaries in mid-May, 1972.

3 In James David Barber's unacknowledged elaboration on the neo-Freudian personality theory of Karen Horney, Donald Trump belongs in the most dangerous category of presidential personality: The Active-Negative. This damaged personality is said to result from early childhood emotional deprivation that is usually the result of a cruel and domineering parent. It is a category in which Barber placed Woodrow Wilson, Lyndon Johnson, and Richard Nixon. *Presidential Character: Predicting Performance in the White House*, 4th ed. (NY: Prentice Hall, 1992). However, the previously designated Active-Negatives came to power enmeshed in political institutions and the need to win elections. Trump is a damaged personality untamed by political institutions, and thus less predictable and perhaps more dangerous. It would be a mistake to see his mind in the context of political ideology (except to the extent that some compromise with party ideology is essential to maintenance of power) or to find labels for him (fascist, authoritarian, etc.) that are then extended to those who voted for him out of pragmatic, largely economic concerns, while repelled by his personality.

a polity that has serious economic issues to address, and two parties in need of reorganization and reform. The foci, methods and theories of APD and economic sociology are essential to such understanding.

Methods, Predictions, and Interpretations of the 2016 Election

Conventional ahistorical survey analysis predicted that Hillary Clinton would comfortably win the election on November 8. The *New York Times* on the eve of the election estimated that Clinton had about an 85 percent chance of winning.⁴ Nate Silver, who claims to have predicted a closer race than most other pollsters, gave Trump a 29 percent chance of winning on Tuesday morning. Clinton had a comfortable lead in the great majority of polls, forecasting victory in both the popular vote and electoral college. The Trump campaign itself, believing the polls, expected to lose.⁵ Clinton had her own impressive Big Data analysis operation (dubbed “Ada”) that performed 400,000 simulations a day and gave strategic advice on where, when and how to campaign or run ads. It failed, especially in the critical states of Michigan and Wisconsin.⁶ Trump’s crude hunches about where and when to hold old fashioned rallies appeared to work better.

Leading political science theories also pointed to a victory for Hillary Clinton. The key election “fundamental” – the state of the economy – had experienced sustained growth since 2008, punctuated by a recent increase in median income, but that did not carry the day for the Democrats.⁷ Nor did the distribution of partisanship

4 Amanda Cox and Josh Katz, “Presidential Forecast Post-Mortem,” *New York Times*, Nov. 15, 2016. https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/16/upshot/presidential-forecast-postmortem.html?_r=0.

5 Nate Silver, “Why FiveThirtyEight Gave Trump A Better Chance Than Almost Anyone Else,” *538.com*, Nov. 11, 2016. <http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/why-fivethirtyeight-gave-trump-a-better-chance-than-almost-anyone-else/>.

6 David Auerbach, “Confirmation Bias: Did Big Data Sink the Clinton Campaign?” *N+1*, Feb. 23, 2017. https://nplusonemag.com/online-only/online-only/confirmationbias/?utm_source=MASTER+LIST+2%2F17%2F17&utm_campaign=3414e1da39-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_01_26&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_b822eb7b82-3414e1da39-399176717&mc_cid=3414e1da39&mc_eid=4e9a9b5f30. Campaign advisers John Podesta and Jennifer Palmieri continue to defend Ada and the campaign’s decisions and blame their loss on factors they could not control, like the FBI investigation.

7 John Sides and Lynn Vavreck, *The Gamble: Choice and Change in the 2012 Election* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014); Tim Mullaney of *Marketwatch* predicted on May 27, 2016 that “every state should go the same way it did last time, because home prices are appreciating, gasoline is cheap, incomes are rising and voters already approve of the job President Obama’s doing, even before he and Clinton get down to re-selling it in earnest this summer.... Unemploy-

propel the Democrats to victory. In October of 2016, Democratic identifiers surpassed Republicans 32 to 27 percent (though the proportion of independents had reached 37 percent).⁸ Fundraising success did not produce victory, since Clinton had the largest presidential campaign fund ever amassed and outspent Trump by more than two to one.⁹ Having a superior ground game guided by abundant data should have led to victory according to political science assumptions, but did not.¹⁰ And despite the rise of primaries for choosing delegates to nominating conventions, party elites were assumed to be quite able to act behind the scenes to deliver the nomination to their favored candidate by directing fundraisers to him/her, and marshaling

ment has been cut in half to 5%, and will be at a full-employment-ish 4.7% or 4.8% by fall if recent rates of improvement hold. Wages are actually kind of beginning to surge: Counting both wage gains and increases in hours, pay is up 4.7% in the past year, according to Regions Financial, and hourly pay for people who have been in their jobs at least a year is up 3.4%. And the price of gas is down from \$3.75 a gallon to \$2.40 in the past 2 years, saving households about \$900 a year each. Finally, all the good news is no longer confined to the top economic strata, like early in the recovery: Median household income adjusted for inflation will hit its Internet-level peaks by summer.” <http://www.marketwatch.com/story/hillary-clinton-will-win-in-november-says-the-economy-2016-05-25>. However, these data did not adequately describe underlying weaknesses in the economic recovery. As *Financial Times* pointed out, despite post-2010 GDP growth and strong household income growth in 2015, economic inequality has continued to increase since 2010 and the bottom half of workers have experienced no income growth since the 1970s. The top one percent in the US hold a much higher share of national income than their cohorts in other leading democracies. Sam Fleming, “US’s Flawed Economic Recovery Divides Trump and Obama Supporters,” *Financial Times*, January 12, 2017. <https://www.ft.com/content/797e8d4c-d778-11e6-944b-e7eb37a6aa8e>.

8 “Party Affiliation Trend since 2004” *Gallup*, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/15370/party-affiliation.aspx>.

9 As Bloomberg summarized Clinton’s funding superiority, “Clinton and her super-PACs raised a total of \$1.2 billion. . . Her sophisticated fundraising operation included a small army of wealthy donors who wrote seven-figure checks, hundreds of bundlers who raised \$100,000 or more from their own networks, and a small-dollar donor operation modeled on the one used by Obama in 2012. She spent heavily on television advertising and her get-out-the-vote operation, but in the end, her fundraising edge was not enough to overcome Trump’s ability to dominate headlines and the airwaves.” Trump raised less [totaling about \$340 million] than John McCain spent in 2008, when he was the last candidate to take public funding. Bill Allison, Mira Rojanasakul, Brittany Harris, and Cedric Sam, “Tracking the 2016 Presidential Money Race,” *Bloomberg Politics*, Dec. 9, 2016. <https://www.bloomberg.com/politics/graphics/2016-presidential-campaign-fundraising/>.

10 Sasha Issenberg, *The Victory Lab: The Secret Science of Winning Campaigns* (Broadway Books Reprint edition, September 17, 2013); and Nate Silver, “Clinton’s Ground Game Didn’t Cost Her The Election; Reporters gave Clinton’s field operation too much credit before. Now it’s getting too much blame. Filed under The Real Story Of 2016, Feb. 13, 2017. https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/clintons-ground-game-didnt-cost-her-the-election/?ex_cid=politicsnewsletter.

endorsements, as well as cuing favorable media attention.¹¹ That process did work for the Democrats, whose leaders, donors, and candidate achieved machine-like control of their party, but the prediction of invisible party power clearly failed for the Republican Party. Of course, no theory can predict history's black swans. It is nevertheless important to try to understand what produced them.

After the election, pollsters and political scientists offered reasons for the inaccurate predictions, particularly in relation to Trump support in the Rust Belt and other hard-pressed cities and rural areas. One important explanation was that exit polls systematically overestimated the number of well-educated voters and underestimated the number of White working class/non-college-educated voters, particularly confounding predictions in closely contested states like Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Florida.¹² Nate Cohn of the *New York Times* also pointed out – undercutting Clinton supporters' claim that Trump voters were fundamentally racist and voted for the candidate who seemed to share their prejudices – that White working class areas in swing states had voted strongly for Barack Obama in 2008 and 2012. For example, Scranton and Wilkes-Barre Pennsylvania, Youngstown, Ohio, rural areas in Iowa, and similar counties in Wisconsin, Michigan, and New England) shifted to Trump by substantial margins in 2016.¹³ Did these areas break late for Trump because of campaign events, or are working class voters simply less likely to respond to exit polls and other surveys, as Cohn suggests (and are the polls themselves accurate for subgroups of respondents, like income categories?)¹⁴ Or

11 Marty Cohen, David Karol, Hans Noel, and John Zaller, *The Party Decides: Presidential Nominations Before and After Reform* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

12 Rob Griffin, Ruy Teixeira, and John Halpin, "Voter Trends in 1916," Center for American Progress, November, 2017, 4–7, and the subsequent state reports.

13 Nate Cohn, "Why Trump Won: Working Class Whites," *New York Times*, November 9, 2016; and "How the Obama Coalition Crumbled, Leaving an Opening for Trump," NYT Dec. 23, 2016. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/23/upshot/how-the-obama-coalition-crumbled-leaving-an-opening-for-trump.html?action=click&contentCollection=The%20Upshot&module=RelatedCoverage®ion=EndOfArticle&pgtype=article>; and Cohn, "Why the Election is Close, and What Trump and Obama Have in Common," *New York Times*, November 6, 2016. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/10/upshot/why-trump-won-working-class-whites.html>; and https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/07/upshot/why-the-election-is-close-and-what-trump-and-obama-have-in-common.html?_r=0. As Alex Seitz-Wald and Sam Petulla noted on NBC News, Jan. 18, 2017, "In fact, Obama actually won more raw votes from non-college educated Whites – because they are so numerous – than from African-Americans, Latinos, or educated Whites." See "Democrats Left in the Lurch: The Curious Decline and Uncertain Future of the Democratic Party," <http://www.nbcnews.com/specials/democrats-left-in-the-lurch>.

14 Nate Cohn and Toni Monkovic, "How Did Donald Trump Win Over So Many Obama Voters?" *New York Times*, November 14, 2016. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/15/upshot/how-did-trump-win-over-so-many-obama-voters.html>. Cohn points out that exit polls, designed to create a picture of the entire electorate in a voting jurisdiction, "simply aren't designed to measure the com-

perhaps Trump supporters were embarrassed to tell pollsters of their preference, given wide condemnation of Trump's personality flaws.¹⁵

But the key finding of more careful post-election analyses, one that points to the underlying causes, was that in 2016, "Among White non-college-educated voters in 2016, there was a 5-point decrease in support for Clinton relative to Obama" along with a small increase in support for Trump relative to Romney. Among Black voters "there was a 5-point decrease in support for Clinton, a 3-point increase in support for Trump, and a 3-point increase in third-party voting."¹⁶ Both findings seem to point to Democratic losses among working class voters, and disillusionment with the Democratic Party among traditional supporters.

Theories rooted in American political development and socio-economic analysis were more helpful for understanding 2016 election outcomes. Stephen Skowronek's historical Regime Theory, based on cycles of party reconstruction and decline, correctly predicted that Clinton would lose. In over 200 years of structured party competition, each dominant party regime has contained two "preemptive" presidencies (presidents who are not affiliated with the Regime Party). Bill Clinton was the first preemptor in the Reagan Regime, and Obama was the second. The second preemption, Skowronek argues, presents more of a

position of the electorate and the attitudes of specific subgroups." Thus they erred in constructing a picture of the electorate that was "too young, too educated, and too diverse," and argue that the shift from Obama to Trump should not have been so surprising, since "Trump had the same pitch to White working-class voters in Iowa, Wisconsin, New Hampshire, Ohio, wherever, as Obama: He would fight for the working class over special interests, and his opponent is bought by Wall Street and would advance the forces of globalization." Cohn notes that Clinton, meanwhile, had a message and persona that resonated even more strongly than in 2008 with "White Protestant enclaves in Connecticut that always vote Republican. [She] won Darien by 12 points – a 43-point improvement over 2012. She won New Canaan by 10 points, a 39-point gain." [and] "Clinton made huge gains in the enclaves of the liberal elite, places like Boston, Seattle, Washington, D.C., where there's a large professional class of lawyers or scientists or professors. But she just did not make similar gains in middle-class suburbs, like Long Island or around Tampa, Fla."

15 Larry Rosen, "The Hidden Group that won the election for Trump," Edison Research, November 15, 2016. <http://www.edisonresearch.com/hidden-group-won-election-trump-exit-poll-analysis-edison-research/>. In another post-election analysis that garnered insufficient attention from Clinton supporters who assumed (like their candidate), that Trump supporters were racist, misogynist, Islamophobic, and so on, mimicking their candidate's presumed traits, Rosen shows that almost a fifth of the electorate held unfavorable opinions of both candidates, but among the "neithers," the large majority broke for Trump (by 49–29%). Rosen argues that "the votes gained by people who said: 'I don't like Trump but I'm going to vote for him anyhow'" handed Trump his critical electoral support in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Florida, and North Carolina. Presumably, as qualitative evidence suggests, it was the desire for change unlikely to occur under a president Clinton that pushed these voters in Trump's direction, rather than an affinity for his personality.

16 Griffin, Texeira, and Halpin, "Voter Trends in 2016," 18.

challenge to the dominant regime, and points, if weakly, to some of the contours of reconstruction to come. A number of media commentators and some political science election models did note the rarity of three winning presidential candidates from the same party, but in Skowronek's theory, that prediction (of only two preemptors in each party regime, and thus little chance for a Clinton victory in 2016) is integral to regime theory dynamics, rather than based on assumptions about voter fatigue with one party. A sequence of three presidential administrations from one party DOES occur after an epochal "Regime" shift (for example, in the Truman victory of 1948 after Roosevelt's three-plus terms, and the 1988 G.H.W. Bush election following two Reagan terms).

The 2016 election was thus a good exemplification of Skowronek's theory of presidential elections, which can be interpreted as accurately predicting important aspects of party sequences and leadership behaviors over two centuries.¹⁷

Regime ("political time") analysis is most useful for understanding megapolitics: the episodic regime reconstruction followed by gradual decline of party regimes over decades. Skowronek defines "regime" as a political philosophy, a coalition of groups/classes that it brings together, and a characteristic set of institutions [say, a reliance on national government regulatory agencies and social programs, as in the New Deal]. This is a much richer conception than the mere vote-based requisites of realignment theories, but it still does not spend much time analyzing the way class and economic change interact with institutions to cause electoral rebellions and party reconstructions. It *does* provide a large, long-time framework for class and institutional analysis, especially at critical junctures in political development, and it prods us to analyze the effects of policies over time, and their impact on classes of voters.

Another theory derived from qualitative historical data on parties and presidents provides a useful framework for understanding how party organizations operated in 2016. Daniel Galvin's book, *Presidential Party Building: Dwight Eisenhower to George W. Bush*¹⁸ describes the Republican Party in the post-World War II era as more committed to party building than Democrats because of the latter's edge in party identifiers. That party-building commitment is

¹⁷ *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to Bill Clinton, Revised Ed.* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1997); and *Presidential Leadership in Political Time, Reprise and Reappraisal*, 2nd ed., Revised and Expanded (Lawrence, KS: University Press of KS, 2011). A post-election paper further elaborates the processes of regime party decline and labels Trump a "disjunctive" president, the last of his party regime: "Obama's Legacy: Tensions and Reconstructions After the Presidential Elections," *Foundation des Etats-Unis, Université Paris, Paris, France*, December 12, 2016.

¹⁸ Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009.

exemplified by the GOP investment in a party-wide ground game in 2016, and the fact that unenthusiastic party leaders rallied around their unwanted nominee, Donald Trump (who made his own last-stage effort to win favor with Republican leaders).

On the other hand, Galvin categorizes Democratic presidential nominees as “party predators” who use the party for their own ends, but do not invest much in enunciating large principles useful for coalition building or strengthening state and local organization. Hillary Clinton seemed to exemplify Galvin’s party predator model, using the DNC as her personal election and patronage machine, and making use of an unprecedented Super Pac treasury to support her ground game and make the DNC financially dependent on her campaign.¹⁹ Party officials and candidates who backed Bernie Sanders felt shunned, and in some cases (one suspects these were more numerous than yet reported) state party organizations and media appeared to have been mobilized to defeat him in the primaries.²⁰ But Democratic Party leaders’ inattention to party building below the national level is a story that predates Hillary Clinton. Focus on their own power and electoral success and inattention to building the party collective were charges earlier levied against Bill Clinton and Barack Obama,²¹ and one might argue, applying Skowronek’s logic, that

19 Former DNC chair Donna Brazile claims that leaders of the DNC and the Clinton campaign signed an “unethical” agreement to subsidize DNC operations from the deep well of Clinton campaign financial resources, with the obvious potential to bend National Committee strategy to her own advantage. See *Hacks: The Inside Story of the Break-ins and Breakdowns That Put Donald Trump in the White House* (NY: Hatchette Books, 2017), 33–6, 97–103. Brazile describes Clinton’s control of the party long before she became its nominee as a “cancer” (102).

20 Data on the intermeshing of the Clinton campaign and the DNC, as well as questionable collaboration with media, were revealed by reports from the hacking of Clinton campaign and DNC emails reported by Wikileaks. https://wikileaks.org/podestaemails/?q=&mfrom=&mto=&title=¬itle=&date_from=&date_to=&nofrom=¬o=&count=50&sort=6#searchresult. For some of the important campaign revelations (including advance access to debate questions from CNN, and evidence of the DNC’s lack of neutrality in the Clinton-Sanders contest), see “18 revelations from Wikileaks’ hacked Clinton emails,” BBC News, 27 October, 2016. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-37639370>. A web site (with flamboyant commentary) focusing on Clinton foundation activities, treatment of Sanders, and CNN links, much of which was also more calmly reported in mainstream media, is: <http://www.mostdamagingwikileaks.com>. See also the brief *New York Times* summary by Michael D. Shear and Matthew Rosenberg, “Released Emails Suggest the DNC Derided the Sanders Campaign,” July 23, 2016. <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/23/us/politics/dnc-emails-sanders-clinton.html>.

21 Obama left the party in a much weaker position than he found it in 2009, argues Sam Stein (“HuffPo political editor: Obama presided over ‘destruction’ of Dems,” *the Hill*, Dec. 28, 2016. <http://thehill.com/homenews/media/312023-huffpo-political-editor-obama-presided-over-destruction-of-dems>). John Hudak, points out that “Obama came to office in January 2009 with a wave of Democratic success nationwide but did little to hold onto that success, keep state parties

“preemptors,” having to make their own way as presidents “out of their [regime] time” would not logically be expected to be party builders when the alternative for these ambitious politicians is to create their own composite slogans and strategies, aligning themselves with the dominant regime party and its fund-raising sources, to carve out an 8-year interlude for themselves as their party languishes in the wilderness. This was Bill Clinton’s strategy, continued by Hillary Clinton.

Theodore Lowi, a founder of the “policy feedback” approach (in which policies shape subsequent politics) is also relevant to this predatory personalization of presidential politics. Lowi attributed the secular deterioration of the president-party link to the institutional expansion of the presidency in the 1930s, the rise of mass communications technologies, and the 1970s rules changes for the delegate selection process.²² He argued that the creation of separate party organizations for presidential campaigns would make presidential candidates, and presidents themselves, even more “plebiscitary” and less connected to their parties, as they raised money on their own for the ever more expensive nomination and reelection process, and built personal coalitions through direct appeals to a political audience.²³ The 2016 contest saw a Democratic “party predator” (in Galvin’s scheme) lose to a Republican unimaginably detached from the party whose label he bore, a candidate who won the GOP nomination with his own money, his own policy program, and personally-staged mass rallies. In both his nomination and governing style, Trump is the ultimate manifestation of Lowi’s evolving 1980s nightmare: a plebiscitary presidency gradually cut loose from the grassroots party and collective democratic control.

In addition to these theoretical contributions, scholars and journalists using both qualitative methods and hard data provided detailed studies of counties

healthy, or keep Democrats in office. During his presidency, Democrats lost 12 Senate seats, 69 House seats, 13 governorships, 21 state legislative chambers and about 1000 state legislative seats.” It was evident in the 2010 midterm results that there had been little investment in state and local party organizations and candidate recruitment, and a disastrous lack of engagement with the state redistricting process. (“Steep challenges face the next Democratic National Committee Chair,” Brookings, Thursday, February 23, 2017. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2017/02/23/steep-challenges-face-the-next-dncchair/?utm_campaign=Brookings+Brief&utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=43298498). On the broader Democratic failings, and charges of neglect by President Obama, see also the post-election interviews with Democratic leaders by Galen Druke and Clare Malone, “The Future of The Democratic Party, According To ‘The Establishment,’” *Fivethirtyeight.com*, Feb. 23, 2017. <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-future-of-the-democratic-party-according-to-the-establishment/>.

²² Theodore J. Lowi, *The End of Liberalism: The Second Republic of the United States*, 2nd ed. (New York: WW Norton, 1979).

²³ Lowi, *The Personal President: Power Invested, Promise Unfulfilled* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986).

experiencing job loss due to industrial flight attributed to trade agreements.²⁴ In the industrial Midwest, Appalachia, and New England, sociologist Shannon Monnat identified areas where Trump support grew out of the misery of a downwardly-mobile working class facing job loss, declining life spans, and hopelessness starkly revealed in drug and alcohol use and suicide rates.²⁵ A 2017 article in *Science* measured the linkage between industrial decline and broad economic and psychological effects on young people. Its authors concluded that “increase in state-level job loss when a cohort is in adolescence leads to an increase in the gap in college attendance between rich and poor youth, driven by falling attendance among youth from

24 Chad Broughton, “The Last Refrigerator,” *Atlantic*, Sep. 16, 2014: “The Last Refrigerator: 10 years ago today, the Maytag plant in Galesburg, Illinois, closed its doors. What’s become of the town in the years since?” *The Atlantic*, September 16, 2014. <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/09/the-last-refrigerator/380154/>; Trip Gabriel, “How Erie Went Red: The Economy Sank, and Trump Rose,” *New York Times*, November 13, 2016. <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/13/us/politics/pennsylvania-trump-votes.html?rref=politics>; Sabrina Tavernise, “Ohioans, Tired of Status Quo, Flipped to Trump for Change,” *New York Times*, November 12, 2016; Sherrod Brown, “When Work Loses Its Dignity,” Op Ed, *New York Times*, Nov. 17, 2016; Nelson D. Schwartz, “Can Trump Save Their Jobs? They’re Counting on It,” *New York Times*, Nov. 13, 2016. <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/13/business/economy/can-trump-save-their-jobs-theyre-counting-on-it.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=a-lede-package-region®ion=top-news&WT.nav=top-news>. See also the perceptive essay written in early 2016 by Frances Fukuyama, “Trump and American Political Decay: After the 2016 Election,” in *Foreign Affairs*, November 9, 2016. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2016-11-09/trump-and-american-political-decay>.

25 Shannon M. Monnat, “Deaths of Despair and Support for Trump in the 2016 Presidential Election,” The Pennsylvania State University, Department of Agricultural Economics, Sociology and Education Research Brief, December 4, 2016 (<http://aease.psu.edu/directory/smm67/Election16.pdf>). See also, Benjamin Wallace-Wells, “The Despair of Learning that Experience No Longer Matters,” *New Yorker*, April 10, 2017 (http://www.newyorker.com/news/benjamin-wallace-wells/the-despair-of-learning-that-experience-no-longer-matters?mbid=nl_170411_Daily&CNDID=26737665&spMailingID=10801900&spUserID=MTMzMtGyNzc4MTgzS0&spJobID=1140854609&spReportId=MTE0MDg1NDYwOQS2); and Thomas B. Edsall, “Reaching Out to the Voters the Left Left Behind,” *New York Times*, April 13, 2017 (https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/13/opinion/reaching-out-to-the-voters-the-left-left-behind.html?em_pos=small&emc=edit_up_20170417&nl=upshot&nl_art=4&nlid=29837088&ref=headline&te=1); The *Washington Post* reports that “Since the beginning of this decade, death rates have risen among people between the ages of 25 and 44 in virtually every racial and ethnic group and almost all states,” but the death rate for Whites has risen to 12 percent, three times higher than for African Americans, and second only to Native Americans’ 18 percent. Joel Achenbach and Dan Keating, “Drug crisis is pushing up death rates for almost all groups of Americans,” *Washington Post*, June 9, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/the-drug-crisis-is-now-pushing-up-death-rates-for-almost-all-groups-of-americans/2017/06/09/971d8424-4aa1-11e7-a186-60c031eab644_story.html?utm_campaign=2017-0612%20Stateline%20Daily&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Pew&utm_term=.a9dfce957679.

the lowest income families and stable attendance among youth from the highest-income families.²⁶ Books and articles by sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild provided rich descriptions of the struggles of Louisiana workers who backed Trump.²⁷ J.D. Vance wrote of the difficult lives of his Kentucky/Ohio working class family in *Hillbilly Elegy*.²⁸ These portraits of struggling communities that voted for Trump stand in sharp contrast to the conclusions drawn in most poll-based accounts, among which a prominent pollster insisted that it was a “myth” that Trump supporters were working class. This and similar refutations of economic distress as a major cause of Trump’s victory were widely cited in the media.²⁹

Thus, one could argue that conventional survey-based methods contributed to prediction failures as well as post-election reactions by scholars and pundits. Quantitative ahistorical measures – polls, in particular – failed both to predict the outcome and to understand its dynamic, the evolving economic situation of particular voters (the downwardly-mobile White working class, as well as economically vulnerable young voters³⁰) and particular places – especially areas that had lost industry since the Clinton years (as a result of trade policies, as well as subsequent technological change), and which suffered downward-trending incomes and lifespans, and upward-trending drug and alcohol use and suicides.

Since exit polls under-sample working class people and supporters of controversial candidates often withhold information or answer falsely when questioned

26 Elizabeth O. Ananat et al., “Linking Job Loss, Inequality, Mental Health, and Education: Job Destruction Knocks many Youth Off the Path to College,” *Science* v. 356 (June 16, 2017), 1127–8.

27 Hochschild, *Strangers in their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right* (The New Press, 2016); and “No Country for White Men,” *Mother Jones*, September/October 2016 Issue. <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2016/08/trump-white-blue-collar-supporters>. See also the earlier insightful ethnographies by sociologist Jennifer Sherman, *Those Who Work, Those Who Don't: Poverty, Morality, and Family in Rural America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1009; and Michele Lamont’s comparative *The Dignity of Working Men: Morality and the Boundaries of Race, Class, and Immigration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

28 J. D. Vance, *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis* (NY: Harper Collins, 2016).

29 Nate Silver, “The Mythology of Trump’s ‘Working Class’ Support, 538.com, May 3, 2016, 2:45 pm. <http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-mythology-of-trumps-working-class-support/>; see also the much reported Nicholas Carnes and Noam Lupu, “Why Trump’s appeal is wider than you might think,” MSNBC, May 8, 2016. <http://www.msnbc.com/msnbc/why-trumps-appeal-wider-you-might-think>. In addition to the flaws in exit poll data, the basis of comparison can lead to misleading conclusions. Since the lowest income voters in the US are minorities who voted overwhelmingly for Clinton, it is among non-Hispanic Whites that the situation of Trump voters in rural and declining industrial areas was most notable.

30 The argument for seeing young Sanders supporters as also economically vulnerable was made by Jeff Stein: “Bernie Sanders’s base isn’t the working class. It’s young people. And Sanders is the candidate of the poor, gaining slim majorities with voters who make \$50 k or less,” *Vox*, May 19, 2016. <http://www.vox.com/2016/5/19/11649054/bernie-sanders-working-class-base>.

about their voting preferences, polling data were particularly vulnerable to missing the deep economic dynamic of the primary elections. By the time of the general election, many traditional Republicans had reluctantly decided to vote for Trump (or against Clinton), producing a complicated composite electorate for Trump. And millions of downwardly-mobile working class and rural voters who despised Trump's personal characteristics nevertheless decided to hold their noses and vote for the only change candidate left standing.

Because of these failures to grasp the deeper meaning of the election, it was particularly important that the political science profession catch up after the votes were counted and examine what pollsters and scholars had missed. But in large swaths of academia, and in the mainstream liberal media, there was little interest in such analysis. Instead, upper middle class professionals and academics fell back on reductionist labeling, insisting that, in the words of a scholar quoted by Joan Williams, “the only acceptable narrative is that those who voted Republican [in 2016] did so because they are racists, sexists, stupid, or all three.”³¹

Economist Eduardo Porter has made a point of publishing hard data about different economic experiences among ethnic groups that may affect their political attitudes, arguing in December, 2016, that “less-educated White voters had a solid economic rationale for voting against the status quo – nearly all the gains from the economic recovery have passed them by.”

“There are almost nine million more jobs than there were at the previous peak in November 2007, just before the economy tumbled into recession. But the gains have not been evenly distributed.

Despite accounting for less than 15 percent of the labor force, Hispanics got more than half of the net additional jobs. Blacks and Asians also gained millions more jobs than they lost. But Whites, who account for 78 percent of the labor force, lost more than 700,000 net jobs over the nine years.

The racial and ethnic divide is starker among workers in their prime. Whites ages 25 to 54 lost some 6.5 million jobs more than they gained over the period. Hispanics in their prime, by contrast, gained some three million jobs net, Asians 1.5 million and Blacks one million.”³²

³¹ Quoted by Joan Williams in *White Working Class: Overcoming Class Cluelessness in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 2017), 60. Williams contests the conventional narrative by summarizing studies showing that working class people are not more racist than their social betters, though their language may differ and their racial distinctions are more likely to be rooted in moralistic judgments about behavior than in assumptions of innate inferiority common among the better educated (62–3).

³² Eduardo Porter, “Where Were Trump’s Votes? Where the Jobs Weren’t,” *Economic Scene*, *NYT*, Dec. 13, 2016. https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/13/business/economy/jobs-economy-voters.html?_r=0.

But for many political scientists and media commentators, If working class voters resented immigrants taking blue-collar jobs while they were losing theirs, that attitude was assumed to reflect a deep-seated fear of cultural diversity rather than a predictable response to economic competition.³³ If they resented people even poorer than they (sometimes only slightly poorer)³⁴ getting free medical care, subsidized housing and college scholarships, this resentment did not reflect perception of injustice or unequal treatment, but a prior, deep-seated racism. Despite considerable evidence that humans do value and demand equal treatment, perceptions of “injustice” were often reduced to “resentment” and “resentment” to “racism.”³⁵

Many academics, pundits, and others appalled by the election outcome engaged in strongly worded denial, delegitimation, efforts to overturn the results via vote-challenges and encouragement of faithless electors, and massive protests. The liberal explanation for Clinton’s loss was seldom attributed to the maldistributed benefits of globalization and neoliberalism, the Clintons’ past personal and policy actions, or a campaign that ignored the working class and envisioned the Democratic party as an identity-focused coalition led by an educated elite; instead, Clinton and her supporters blamed “Russian attempts to undermine our democracy,” and unwarranted FBI announcements related to email servers for her loss.³⁶ They saw no need to reach out to White

33 Sean McElwee and Jason McDaniel, “Fear of Diversity Made People More Likely to Vote Trump: The 2016 Election was Really a Battle about having an Open Society,” *The Nation*, March 14, 2017. <https://www.thenation.com/article/fear-of-diversity-made-people-more-likely-to-vote-trump/>.

34 On reactions to unequal treatment in government assistance programs see Eduardo Porter, “Trump Budget Proposal Reflects Working-Class Resentment of the Poor,” *NYT*, Economic Scene, March 7, 2017. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/07/business/economy/trump-budget-entitlements-working-class.html?_r=0; Joan Williams, *White Working Class*, 13–23.

35 Nate Cohn, referring to political science claims that racial resentment was the best predictor of voter shifts from Obama to Trump, uses, as a measure of “racial resentment,” agreement or disagreement with the statement that “White people in the US have certain advantages because of the color of their skin.” There are, as Porter’s data suggest, reasons why a downwardly mobile working class White respondent would discount the notion that he or she is privileged. Cohn, “The Obama-Trump Voters Are Real. Here’s What They Think.” *NYT*, AUG. 15, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/15/upshot/the-obama-trump-voters-are-real-heres-what-they-think.html>. For a suggestion that such skepticism might also prevail among working class White women as well as men, see Amy Yurkanin, “Poor, rural and addicted: Drugs drive surge in White women in prison,” *AL.Com*, August 24, 2017. http://www.al.com/news/index.ssf/2017/08/poor_rural_and_addicted_drugs.html?utm_campaign=2017-08-24+Stateline+Daily&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Pew#incart_river_home.

36 Tessa Berenson, “Hillary Clinton Says She Lost Because of James Comey and Vladimir Putin,” *Time*, Dec 16, 2016. <http://time.com/4604955/hillary-clinton-election-james-comey-vladimir-pu>

workers, since they were not really economically disadvantaged, and their motives probably racist, sexist, and Islamophobic as Clinton herself argued. Their numbers would inevitably diminish, according to demographic predictions, and the redistributive and nation-centered policies needed to get their votes would cost the Democrats support from college-educated professionals and immigrants.³⁷

Spurred by the new president's inflammatory words and rapid-fire executive orders, the academic and media focus quickly turned to protecting people seen as vulnerable and meritorious (unlike the disgruntled Trump voters). The impressive success of mass protests in countering the first executive order on non-citizen entry, and the November, 2017, Democratic victories in state campaigns fueled by hostility to Trump seemed to confirm the strategy of expressive protest at the expense of long-term party-building around policy issues and ideas.³⁸

tin/. See also Ronald Brownstein, "The Diverse Left and White Working-Class Right," *Atlantic*, July 28, 2016. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/07/with-diversity-on-the-left-the-white-working-class-moves-right/493286/>.

37 See, for example, David Leonhardt, "The Democratic Base Isn't Enough," *New York Times*, Friday, February 22, 2017 <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/22/opinion/the-democratic-base-isnt-enough.html>; and Leonhardt, "Don't Refight the 2016 Campaign," *New York Times*, Feb. 24, 2017. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/24/opinion/dont-refight-the-2016-campaign.html>); and Nate Cohn, "Democrats' Best Bet to Retake the House? Follow the Sun," [to places with upper income, college-educated voters and Hispanics, like Orange County, CA]. *New York Times*, Feb. 22, 2017. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/22/upshot/democrats-best-bet-for-house-control-is-following-the-sun.html>).

38 Party building requires diligent, long-term efforts, coordinated with national and state legislators. Scholars of social movements (this author included) find successful protest exhilarating, but the foci of many post-election protests were not conducive to building the broad-based social movements needed to transform parties. It was not clear what women costumed as vaginas were trying to communicate to prospective allies. And the practicality, as an expression of movement demands and new coalition strategies, of posters calling for "No borders, no nations, no deportations!" was also uncertain. For an early critique of expressive, identity-focused protest as an inadequate basis for democratic (and Democratic Party) reform, see Mark Lilla, "The End of Identity Liberalism," *New York Times Sunday Review*, Nov 18, 2016 (http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/20/opinion/sunday/the-end-of-identity-liberalism.html?_r=0); and "Columbia Professor Says Democrats Need To Move Beyond Identity Politics," *NPR Morning Edition*, November 25, 2016:11 AM ET (<http://www.npr.org/2016/11/25/503316461/columbia-professor-says-democrats-need-to-move-beyond-identity-politics>). In a similar same vein, see George Lakoff, "Understanding Trump," *Huffington Post*, 7-22-16 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/george-lakoff/understanding-trump_b_11144938.html.

Institutional Roots of Trump Victory: Party and Policy Change after the 1972 Reforms

Essential to Trump's victory in the Republican nomination process were the political reforms of the 1970s,³⁹ and the Democratic Party's evolution in the Clinton administration of 1993–2000. The invention of the mandatory primary/caucus system in 1969–1972 was the perfect hatchery for an “outsider” candidate independent of a major party to succeed in getting the party's nomination.

The expansion of primary contests for both presidential and congressional nominations strongly contributed to party polarization, since the twenty percent or fewer Americans who typically vote in primaries tend to be more ideological than the mass base of the parties. Delegates to presidential nominating conventions became more polarized from each other, and more distant from their mass bases after the reforms of 1969–1972.⁴⁰ Voters in congressional primaries, and presumably also in presidential primaries, are likely to be older, better educated and more affluent than ordinary party identifiers,⁴¹ so it might be argued that the reforms, despite their democratic motives, also contributed to weaker representation for low-income Americans than was the case under the old system in which party officials who controlled the nomination process had to win votes from a much wider constituency.

The 1972 reforms also created a need for more candidate fund-raising because of the greatly expanded number of primaries and caucuses. Although the 1971

39 The decade of the 1970s was fraught with economic, social, and political change, as one would expect in the decade before a realignment. There was great opposition to the continuing Vietnam war, which led the Democratic Party to reassess its long Cold War bellicosity. There were major political rules changes regarding presidential nominations and campaign finance, and new laws triggered by opposition to the war and other aspects of Nixon administration foreign policy (like Vietnam war expansion and regime change in Chile). As a result of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, in which the US expanded its support for Israel with arms sales, OPEC quadrupled the price of oil, triggering massive inflation, unemployment, and the need for large industrial investment in more energy-efficient processes (one might say that Jimmie Carter's presidency was brought down by the foreign policy of Nixon-Kissinger). The 1970s economic restructuring began the process of reversal of New Deal-generated trends toward greater economic equality. From the mid-1970s, there was a steady growth of economic inequality in the US. See, for example, <http://www.the-crises.com/income-inequality-in-the-us-1/>. The line of the graph is still ascending.

40 Byron E. Shafer, “The Pure Partisan Institution: National Party Conventions as Research Sites,” in *Oxford Handbook of American Political Parties and Interest Groups*, ed. L. Sandy Maisel (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), Table 14.3, page 279.

41 Elaine Kamarck, Alexander Podkul, and Nicholas W. Zeppos, “Political Polarization and the 2016 Congressional Primaries,” *Brookings*, January 18, 2017. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/political-polarization-and-the-2016-congressional-primaries/>.

creation of a public funding system for presidential candidates who chose to abide by its limits initially held down spending levels, presidential hopefuls after the 1990s began to abandon the public system, believing they could increase their chances of winning with unlimited access to private donations. George W. Bush was the first president to opt out of public matching funds for his 1999–2000 nomination campaign. The Supreme Court in its 1976 *Buckley v. Valeo* decision had unleashed millionaire candidate spending on their own races as a matter of “free speech,” and Bush feared that multi-millionaire Steve Forbes would run again for the GOP nomination. Bush went back into the public funding system in the general election, however.

The first presidential candidate to abandon the public funding system altogether (for both nomination and election phases) was Barack Obama in 2008. Hillary Clinton, his opponent for the nomination imitated his choice. Only the Republican nominee, John McCain, a pioneer of the bipartisan effort to restrain spending, remained in the public system. He lost overwhelmingly, vastly outspent by Barack Obama.⁴² In 2010, another momentous institutional change occurred when the Supreme Court’s *Citizens United* ruling opened the floodgates for “independent” donations by corporations, labor unions and extremely wealthy individuals, especially through the device of “superpacs.”

A “New Democrat” Embraces Neoliberalism: the Clintonian Transformation of the Democratic Party

President Clinton, a classic “preemptor” in Skowronek’s scheme, presented himself in 1992 as a “New Democrat” with a strategy of “triangulating” between

⁴² See the Metrocosm graph in Max Galka, “How 2016 Compares to 56 Years of Presidential Campaign Spending,” *Huffington Post*, November 7, 2016. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/56-years-of-presidential-campaign-spending-how-2016_us_5820bf9ce4b0334571e09fc1. Note that final spending reports were not yet available in early November. In addition, the figures in the graph omit “spending by unaffiliated super PACs and other independent expenditures for or against the general election candidates (often on behalf of a primary election opponent from the same party).” For more complete spending totals in 2016 see “Election 2016: Money Raised as of December, 2016.” <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/politics/2016-election/campaign-finance/>. These data show Hillary Clinton’s money raised as of Dec. 31 at \$1.4 billion, compared to Donald Trump’s \$958 million. Party and joint fundraising efforts ended up quite close, thanks to the Republican Party’s late-stage support for Trump as a part of its broader campaign. Reported spending by the Clinton campaign was almost 90 percent higher than Trump’s campaign (\$623 to \$335 million) and her superpac spent over two and a half times as much as Trump’s (\$204 v. 79 million).

his own and the opposition party. He supported the dismantling of the New Deal regulatory and welfare state and he and Vice-president Gore undertook an ambitious program to privatize government functions.

With Republican help, Clinton persuaded Congress to ratify the North American Free Trade Agreement. The consequences for American manufacturing jobs of NAFTA and the Clinton-supported entry of China into the WTO were severe.⁴³ Then when NAFTA in its early years proved devastating to the Mexican agricultural economy, millions of undocumented Mexicans emigrated to the US (ultimately contributing a second issue to the Trump campaign).⁴⁴

Clinton's preemptive strategy was also implemented in the administration's support for deregulation of telecommunications and finance, tax cuts, deep structural changes in New Deal policies on welfare and agriculture, and a strong tough-on crime stance. The administration's trade and deregulation policies were continued by the George W. Bush administration and the two presidents' financial deregulation policies strongly contributed to the financial crash of 2008 and the worst recession since the Great Depression, adding another dimension to working class decline.⁴⁵ In 2016, the effects of financial deregulation were still

⁴³ Jeff Faux, "NAFTA's Impact on US Workers," Economic Policy Institute, December 9, 2013. <http://www.epi.org/blog/naftas-impact-workers/>; Robert E. Scott, "Manufacturing Job Loss: Trade, not Productivity, is the Culprit." Economic Policy Institute, August 11, 2015. <http://www.epi.org/publication/manufacturing-job-loss-trade-not-productivity-is-the-culprit/>. [See chart: "US Manufacturing Employment, January, 1970–December, 2014 (millions of jobs)," EPI Analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics (2015a)]. NAFTA, Faux argues caused the loss of about 700,000 manufacturing jobs as production moved to Mexico, income losses from which the vast majority of affected workers would never recover. It also rapidly "strengthened the ability of US employers to force workers to accept lower wages and benefits," and the competition with US agricultural imports that NAFTA imposed on Mexico "was a major cause in the dramatic increase in undocumented workers flowing into the US labor market," further lowering US wages, especially in low-skilled occupations. <http://www.epi.org/blog/naftas-impact-workers/>.

⁴⁴ George Borjas, "The Immigration Debate We Need," *New York Times*, Feb. 27, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/27/opinion/the-immigration-debate-we-need.html>.

⁴⁵ See notes 21–25 above, and Neil Irwin and Josh Katz, "The Geography of Trumpism," *New York Times*, March 12, 2016; <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/13/upshot/the-geography-of-trumpism.html?&moduleDetail=section-news2&action=click&contentCollection=Politics®ion=Footer&module=MoreInSection&version=WhatsNext&contentID=WhatsNext&pgtype=article>; George Saunders, "Who Are All These Trump Supporters? At the candidate's rallies, a new understanding of America emerges." *New Yorker*, July 11 & 18, 2016 Issue; Larissa MacFarquhar, "In the Heart of Trump Country: West Virginia used to vote solidly Democratic. Now it belongs to Trump. What happened?" *New Yorker*, Oct. 10, 2016; Thomas Kaplan, "This Is Trump Country," *New Yorker*, March 4, 2016 <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/03/04/us/politics/donald-trump-voters.html>; Rod Dreher, "Trump: Tribune of Poor White People," *The American Conservative*, July 22, 2016, 10:58 AM <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/dreher/trump-us-politics-poor-whites/>.

strongly felt at the lower rungs of the class ladder and were materially visible in the backlog of foreclosed houses that represents almost two hundred billion dollars of lost wealth for working class and lower-middle class Americans.⁴⁶

These Clintonian decisions and their neoliberal inspirations – the agenda of a preemptive president who abandoned the political philosophy of the party whose nomination he won in 1992 for one that, in Skowronekian style, embraced most of the regime party's program, had profound and lasting effects on the Democratic Party that began as the party of the common man.

The Replacement of Economic with Social Issue Liberalism

In the 1980s and 1990s, the Democratic Party began to reconfigure its base by courting upper-income professionals, women and LGBT groups, and paying less attention to the working class. Bill Clinton was the first Democratic presidential candidate to drop references to the “working class” and to talk instead about the problems of the “middle class.”⁴⁷

The Democratic Party had begun to lose working class identifiers in the 1970s as they adopted liberal social issue positions unpopular with people holding traditional religious values. Divisive social issues like those dealing with alcohol, morality, and school prayer had once been largely confined to the states, where they posed less threat to national party unity. The nationalization of religious/moral issues, which gained momentum in the same decade as the change in party nomination rules, was bound to be reflected in delegate selection processes and presidential elections. The new primary rules of the early 1970s increased Democratic success with socially liberal women, particularly after the institution of a gender quota system for Democratic delegates and the emergence of liberal campaign funding groups like Emily's List that supported only women candidates who backed abortion rights.

⁴⁶ On the continuing effects of mortgage foreclosures and the weak government effort to ameliorate the losses, see Laura Kusisto, “Many Who Lost Homes to Foreclosure in Last Decade Won't Return – NAR,” *Wall Street Journal*, April 20, 2015 12:50 p.m. ET <http://www.wsj.com/articles/many-who-lost-homes-to-foreclosure-in-last-decade-wont-return-nar-1429548640>; and David Dayen, “Obama's Foreclosure Relief Program Was Designed to Help Bankers, Not Homeowners,” *American Prospect*, Winter, 2015 (accessed at <http://billmoyers.com/2015/02/14/needless-default/>). Dayen cites figures from economists Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman: “the bottom 90 percent of Americans saw one-third of their wealth wiped out between 2007 and 2009, and there has been no recovery since.”

⁴⁷ Gwen Ifill, “Whose Welfare? The Poor, They Are Different, and in '92, Ever More Invisible,” *New York Times*, January 19, 1992. <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/01/19/weekinreview/whose-welfare-the-poor-they-are-different-and-in-92-ever-more-invisible.html>.

The Party had, for nearly two centuries, won working class votes with liberal economic policies and social policies that did not openly challenge traditional working class values, but that combination did not survive the 1970s. Jimmy Carter, the last Democratic candidate to win the majority (10/11) of states in the South, was openly religious, supported civil rights and human rights abroad, but was not very sympathetic to abortion rights. He took liberal positions on most economic policies, except for deregulation of transportation (which Liberal Democrats also supported), and new natural gas supplies. He sponsored a public works program to reduce unemployment and was the last Democratic president to make passage of a pro-union labor law a policy priority.

Post-Carter Democrats replaced the policy package preferred by working class voters – economic liberalism and social conservatism (or at least keeping moral issues in the realm of state politics), and embraced economic neoliberalism paired with social liberalism. With the two parties essentially tied on economic policy, many working class Whites moved to the Republican Party after the mid-1990s (with a modest Democratic recovery in 2006–2008, followed by resumed loss after 2010).⁴⁸

Democratic Party elites after Bill Clinton had calculated that they could afford to let much of the White working class go if they could attract more upper middle class professionals and women, and that southern and Midwestern working class votes lost to the party could be replaced with votes of Hispanics (a vote exchange proposed by political scientist Thomas F. Schaller in his book, *Whistling Past Dixie*).⁴⁹

This break with Democratic tradition – the alienation of the evangelical protestant and Catholic working class in both the South and non-South – was unprecedented, a consequence of economic policy, institutional change, and the nationalization of divisive social issues once mostly confined to the states, but which became national issues with Supreme Court decisions on prayer in the schools, abortion, and later, gay marriage. From the 1950s through the 1970s, with the exception of the Nixon landslide in 1972, the Catholic vote, mostly working class and lower middle class, was overwhelmingly Democratic. Beginning in 1980,

⁴⁸ For longer-term data on class voting (back to the Eisenhower years), see Jeffrey Stonecash, “The Puzzle of Class in Presidential Voting,” *The Forum* 15, no. 1 (2017), 29–49. See also the graph of Democratic Party identification of Whites (by educational level) in Griffin, Teixeira, and Halpin, “Voter Trends in 2016,” 32.

⁴⁹ Schaller, *Whistling Past Dixie: How Democrats Can Win Without the South* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008). See also Alan Abramowitz, “The Great Party Switch,” *the American Prospect*, Feb 18, 2015 on Schaller and the improvement of Democratic prospects as a result of demographic trends (the non-White share of the electorate increasing from 13 to 26 percent between 1992 and 2008). (<http://prospect.org/article/great-party-switch>).

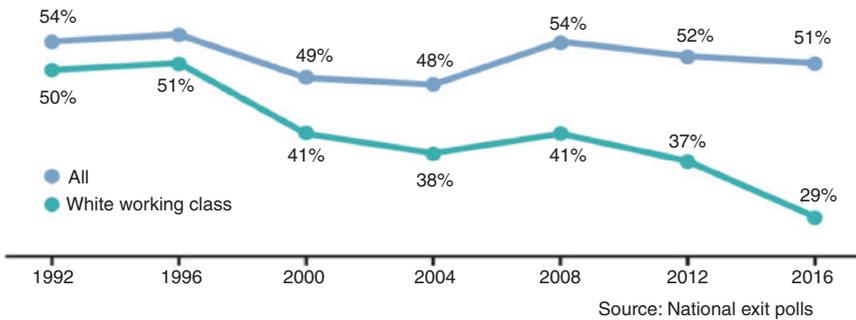


Figure 1: Democratic Share of Two-Party Popular vote.

Source: Guy Molyneux, “Mapping the White Working Class,” *American Prospect*, Dec. 20, 2016”, <http://prospect.org/article/mapping-white-working-class>.

it dropped to a rough 50–50 split, with the exception of a majority for Obama in 2008. Promising both economic change and social conservatism, Trump carried Catholics (about a quarter of the electorate) by 52 to 45% in 2016.⁵⁰

The Republicans who opened their arms to the White working class offered them at least some policies they could embrace – traditional moral values and a more muscular nationalism. But in the post-recession economy of the Bush/Obama era, working class voters were becoming restless for substantive economic improvement.⁵¹

⁵⁰ “Trump wins Catholic vote in election that awoke religious feeling,” *Crux*, November 9, 2016. <https://cruxnow.com/church-in-the-usa/2016/11/09/trump-wins-catholic-vote-election-awoke-religious-feeling/>; and “Presidential Vote by Religious Affiliation and Race,” Pew Research Center, November 9, 2016. http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/09/how-the-faithful-voted-a-preliminary-2016-analysis/ft_16-11-09_relig_exitpoll_religrace/.

⁵¹ The Obama years reconfigured some of the earlier policy landscape inherited from “New Democrat” Bill Clinton and Republican George W. Bush, but the Democratic administration did little to help homeowners with huge capital losses in their under-water mortgaged houses. It gave the working class a very limited jobs stimulus and a complicated new health care system with rising annual premium costs; Obama and Secretary of State Clinton also expanded wars into new parts of the Middle East and supported a 2009 coup in Honduras (whose resulting societal impoverishment and violence created another surge of desperate emigration); and he increased military and intelligence budgets, eating into revenues that might have put people to work in infrastructure, energy, and education. Though Mexican immigration slowed significantly during the recession, overall immigration declined only marginally in the Obama years, and the administration backed a controversial new set of trade treaties, negotiated in secret by corporate interests, that promised little or no benefit for lower and middle class Americans. On the weak economic policies of this second “preemptor,” see Ryan Lizza, The Obama Memos: The making of a post-post-partisan Presidency, *New Yorker*, January 23, 2012. <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/ask/2012/01/ryan-lizza-post-partisan-obama.html>. The term “post-partisan”

The economic disadvantage of low-education, unemployed or underemployed workers was increasingly obvious after the 2007–2008 recession. Both parties had supported sharply expanded immigration and free trade policies that, in today's already quite free commerce, promise fewer advantages than in the past, while indisputably conferring significant advantages on class sectors that are already doing very well. Economists argue that free trade and open borders may lead to a slightly higher overall GDP, but to laid-off Massachusetts or Alabama textile workers, North Carolina furniture workers, Illinois appliance factory workers, upstate New York machine workers, or Iowa meat industry workers who were not in a position to learn computer skills, leave family and friends, and look for a job in the new economy, the benefits of globalization seemed illusory after the 1990s.⁵²

Many White and African-American construction and other low-skilled workers lost their jobs to immigrants,⁵³ but so did relatively high-skilled workers. Consider the Disney technology professionals forced to train their South Asian replacements. Where does a 53-year old computer tech worker find a new job? (While she searched, she led the Disney lawsuit, and spoke at Trump rallies).⁵⁴ The open borders argument was strong among elites of both parties, as Republicans looked

is analogous to the “triangulation” of the other Skowronekian preemptor in the Reagan regime, Bill Clinton.

52 Economists, who provide the lion's share of expert studies supporting further trade loosening, are ideologically predisposed to arguments that free markets in labor, goods, and capital are broadly beneficial. When they explore the relationships between trade, immigration, and national well-being, the analysis is on a grand scale and focused on small aggregate national or international gains from trade, disregarding the benefits and costs borne by different social groups (which are more relevant for election predictions). For two critical views of “free trade,” see Clyde Prestowitz, “How did Washington get trade policy so wrong? And what comes next? *Washington Monthly Magazine*, June/July/August 2016, 25–52; and Dani Rodrik, “Thinking Straight About Fair Trade,” January 26, 2017. http://rodrik.typepad.com/dani_rodriks_weblog/2017/01/what-did-nafta-really-do.html.

53 Citing the Bureau of Labor Statistics and work by economists George J. Borjas and Christopher Smith, Steven A. Camarota points out that, “as of November, there were 1.5 million fewer native-born Americans working than in November 2007, while 2 million more immigrants (legal and illegal) were working. Thus, all net employment gains since November 2007 have gone to immigrants. The decline in work has particularly affected those under age 29, and the less-educated, who are the most likely to be in competition with immigrants.” Camarota, “Unskilled Workers Lose out to Immigrants,” Room for Debate, *NYT* Jan. 6, 2015. <https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2015/01/06/do-immigrants-take-jobs-from-american-born-workers/unskilled-workers-lose-out-to-immigrants>.

54 “Lawsuits Claim Disney Colluded to Replace US Workers with Immigrants,” *New York Times*, Jan. 25, 2016. <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/26/us/lawsuit-claims-disney-colluded-to-replace-us-workers-with-immigrants.html>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Th0GHaUUuMY>.

for cheap labor, and Democrats sought cheap votes. These were the elite policy commitments that provoked the 2016 electoral uprising.

The Rise of “Outsider” Candidates

The insurgent candidate who responded to working class discontent in the Democratic Party, Bernie Sanders, was an outsider but with government experience on the fringe of his adopted party. As an independent, pro-labor social democrat who caucused with the Democrats in Congress, he was more loosely attached to Democratic trade, deregulation, and immigration policy. Sanders was very skeptical of the new round of trade treaties backed by President Obama and Hillary Clinton and had voted against immigration bills that he saw as threats to labor unions. He represented the class of voters orphaned by the post-Carter Democrats, but with different social/political characteristics from the Trump voters. In particular, Sanders supporters were younger, and more secular.⁵⁵

Polling data in the primaries suggested that Sanders was stronger than Clinton among White voters with low incomes and without college degrees; his percentage was 37 to Clinton’s 30 percent in those groups, with the difference mostly an effect of age. Younger voters who do not have college degrees experience considerable economic insecurity, and their economic status was another reason that the young were far more enthusiastic about Sanders than Clinton. Among voters under 29

See also Daisuke Wakabayashi and Nelson D. Schwartz, “Not Everyone in Tech Cheers Visa Program for Foreign Workers,” *New York Times*, Feb. 5, 2017 (https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/05/business/h-1b-visa-tech-cheers-for-foreign-workers.html?_r=0); and John Boun, Guarav Khanna, and Nicolas Morales, “Reservoir of Foreign Talent,” *Science*, v. 356 (19 May 2017), 697. The latter calculate that “the influx of foreign-born computer scientists since the early 1990s...put downward pressure on the wages of computer scientists and, as result, discouraged some US-born college graduates from becoming computer scientists... [I]mmigration, enabled by the H-1B visa program...decreased wages of US computer scientists by 2.6–5.1 percent in 2001. Moreover, US workers switched to other occupations, which lowered the number of domestic computer scientists by 6–11% in 2001.”

⁵⁵ Though the Democratic Party has lost working class Whites in both regions, only about 28% of White working class voters in the South identify as Democrats, compared to about 40% living outside the South. Sean McElwee, “The truth about the White working class: Why it’s really allergic to voting for Democrats,” *Salon*, Nov. 29, 2015. http://www.salon.com/2015/11/29/the_truth_about_the_white_working_class_why_its_really_allergic_to_voting_for_democrats/. The difference could be attributed to racism, but religious and economic differences are also important; the South, for cultural and economic reasons, is more religious, more dependent on fossil fuel extraction and military installations, and more hostile to environmental regulation, as well as gun control.

and without college degrees, Sanders led Clinton 68 to 10; he held a similarly large lead among young voters with incomes under \$25,000 a year.⁵⁶

Sanders represents an important ideological thread in American political history: the populist/socialist variant exemplified by Eugene Debs, William Jennings Bryan, Huey Long, and George McGovern (who came from a state [South Dakota] with a strong populist tradition and was labeled, in his day, “The Prairie Populist”). Sanders is an authentic populist, without the ethnic prejudice associated with Trump. He had been active in the civil rights movement in the 1960s, though that fact failed to strengthen his support among African American leaders.⁵⁷

One advantage claimed for the national two-party system and the old-style presidential nomination system was that they weeded out “extremist” candidates. A party’s candidate for president had to be broadly acceptable to thousands of elected officials from across the country. Even when an extremist or race-based faction won locally, or split off as a third party nominee, he was easily defeated at the national level. In 2016, that was not the case. A primary system that allowed “outsider” candidates to exploit economic grievances against the elites of both parties also allowed them to raise money in unconventional ways – for Sanders, in small donations via internet appeals; for Trump, self-financing authorized by the Supreme Court’s 1976 decision allowing wealthy candidates to spend unlimited amounts from their own fortunes. Insurgent candidates not dependent on party leaders or their donor networks can produce a perfect storm in presidential election politics. In 2016, the supreme outsider, an unpredictable novice with no party or definable ideology, won the Republican nomination and ran against an elite-supported regular Democrat. Hillary Clinton was able to defeat her insurgent competitor in the primaries because, unlike the Republicans, Democrats in the 1980s had created a large block of superdelegates (nearly all of whom were early endorsers of Clinton’s candidacy) and the Clinton campaign organization was extremely well funded and not hesitant to extend its control over the Democratic National Committee, state party organizations, and sympathetic media (see above).

Had she experienced no strong intra-party opposition, Hillary Clinton would probably have moved to the right before the primaries were over, an ideological position where she has always been comfortable, and a continuation of the preemptive “triangulating” model of the Bill Clinton presidency. However, had she followed her inclinations on militarism, trade, regulation, and climate issues

⁵⁶ Jeff Stein, “Bernie Sanders’s base.”

⁵⁷ Tim Murphy and Pema Levy, “Civil Rights Hero John Lewis Slams Bernie Sanders,” *Mother Jones*, Feb. 11, 2016 6:00 PM. <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2016/02/john-lewis-bernie-sanders-civil-rights/>.

rather than reversing her previous positions to counter the Sanders threat, she would have risked losing young and change-hungry supporters of Bernie Sanders. Fancy footwork by Clinton, combined with extraordinary financial resources and the unprecedented merger of campaign and national party committee defeated the much more popular insurgent, one who might well have been able to defeat Donald Trump and in the process, restructure the Democratic Party, returning it to its traditional position as the party of have-nots.⁵⁸

Conclusion: Slouching Toward Realignment

Donald Trump owes his election to post-1972 changes in party institutions, economic developments that were largely the result of presidential policies in both parties, and sheer happenstance.

It is virtually impossible to predict the behavior of the most unusual president in American history, one with no previous experience in political institutions, parties, or movements, who has chosen to bring into his policy circle advisers and cabinet members many of whom are themselves political amateurs. An additional complication is his unusual personality, with its suggestions of narcissism and “active-negative” characteristics. The only prediction one can reliably make of active-negatives is that they will react with personal aggression to challenges of any sort; and that, following James David Barber’s reasoning, they will end badly.⁵⁹

Stephen Skowronek’s prediction, based on regime theory, is that Trump will serve only one term and thus take his place in political history as a “disjunctive” president whose failures lead to a new and long-lasting realignment (“reconstruction” of a new party regime, in his terminology)⁶⁰ The prediction seems quite plausible given the disruption within the regime party (the GOP) and the electorate, but that reconstruction would require that the Democratic Party, as the current non-regime party, reorganize itself on the basis of a new, expanded coalition with a new set of principles, policies, and institutional mechanisms.

After the election, Democrats became absorbed in protest and personal attacks on the administration, with the most common tropes being corruption

⁵⁸ For one argument that Sanders would have defeated Trump, see David Horsey, “President Sanders? Bernie would have beaten Trump,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 22, 2016. <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/topoftheticket/la-na-tt-bernie-beats-trump-20161222-story.html>.

⁵⁹ See note 3 above.

⁶⁰ Stephen Skowronek, “Barack Obama and the Promise of Transformative Leadership” *Fondation des Etats-Unis Universite Paris Diderot & Larca*, Paris, December 12, 2016.

within the Trump family and illegal relations with Russia, seen anew as a major foreign threat to American democracy. Such strategies are not particularly promising for constructing a new majority party, and the lower ranks of potential candidates are thin, thanks to the domination of the party and DNC by the Clinton organization and lack of party-building effort in the Obama years.

The immediate problem of focusing exclusively on denial, delegitimation, and deceitful Russians is that it impedes learning in the out-party, or remedial policy change to regain its working and lower middle class base. The Democratic establishment may instead be tempted to find a way to revive the Clinton party system with less objectionable candidates. The attraction of the Clinton model was that it could expand with demographic trends: a continued increase in college graduates, and a base of identity groups whose numbers are predicted to expand. Promising only to celebrate diversity, legalize immigrants, and resume multinational trade treaties entails no domestic redistribution philosophy and no constructive foreign policy; It would thus pose little threat to the economic and cultural domination of elites.

It has become common today to speculate about a realignment in which a party of college graduates (Brookings labels them “high output Americans”) confronts globalization’s losers, the poorly educated and downwardly mobile “low output” Americans.⁶¹ It is unclear at this point how the party of successful college-educated Americans might reach a majority if it eschewed any significant cultivation of the working classes via policy benefits. No elite-led party has been able to succeed without a working class clientele. But history suggests two possible models.

One is the Gilded Age Republican coalition of capitalists, the growing urban middle classes, and a base of workers content with protection of US industry from foreign competition but little in terms of distributive benefits.⁶² In addition, as

⁶¹ Mark Muro and Sifan Liu, “Another Clinton-Trump divide: High-output America vs low-output America,” Brookings, Tuesday, November 29, 2016. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2016/11/29/another-clinton-trump-divide-high-output-america-vs-low-output-america/>. The authors note that “The less-than-500 counties that Hillary Clinton carried nationwide encompassed a massive 64 percent of America’s economic activity as measured by total output in 2015. By contrast, the more-than-2600 counties that Donald Trump won generated just 36 percent of the country’s output – just a little more than one-third of the nation’s economic activity.... Clinton won every large-sized county economy in the country. Her base of 493 counties was heavily metropolitan. By contrast, Trumpland consists of hundreds and hundreds of tiny low-output locations that comprise the non-metropolitan hinterland of America, along with some suburban and exurban metro counties.”

⁶² In the first Gilded Age of the late 19th century, there were some substantive benefits in the form of Union veterans’ pensions and land distribution.

long as domestic manufacturing growth was vigorous, new immigrants were welcomed for their low-wage costs and controllability (aided by the fact that up to a third intended to make some money and return to the old country).⁶³ The contemporary Republican version of this alliance, similar to that of the Gilded Age, would leave capitalists in control of essential economic policies (taxes, social spending, and regulation) and deliver a modicum of working class accommodation through trade and immigration restrictions.

The Democratic version of Gilded Age politics would continue large-scale immigration with a fast-track to voting citizenship, enact the free trade agreements unpopular with workers but embraced by elites in both parties, and perhaps supply an increment of welfare, funded by higher taxes on the very rich to insure quiescence among downwardly-mobile workers while waiting for demographic trends to diminish their numbers. In the growing cities carried by Clinton, the advantage of large-scale immigration to an expanded Democratic electorate would be supplemented by a low-cost domestic work force for professional couples (house and yard work and child care), and appreciated by city and state officials worried about loss of population and political representation.

But those are not the only imaginable possibilities for the coming realignment Skowronek predicts after 4 years of a “disjunctive” Trump administration. In Congress, Senators Bernie Sanders, Sherrod Brown, and Elizabeth Warren appear committed to a re-Populization of the Democratic Party, a movement toward revived class politics.

It is unfortunate that current semantic confusion and neglect of our own history have made “populism” a term of condemnation. In the years after the UK decision to leave the EU, growing European opposition to large-scale migration from the Middle East and North Africa, the emergence of anti-immigrant parties of fascist heritage, and the rise of Donald Trump, scholars and media commentators with little knowledge of actual 19th century American politics attempted to link these international events with American Populism in one conceptual phenomenon. It has been a messy and unenlightening exercise, its practitioners unable to construct a definition applying to all these phenomena and supported with empirical evidence.

The semantic confusion has obscured the major historical reform role of American Populism and its value as a model for a future democratic reform

⁶³ Richard F. Bense, *The Political Economy of American Industrialization 1877–1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Mark Wyman, *Round Trip to America: The Immigrants Return to Europe, 1880–1930* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996).

coalition. To quote a leading contemporary scholar on the substance and legacy of actual American Populism,

“The 1890s Populists drew from multiple reform impulses, from women’s suffragists to urban supporters of Henry George’s Single Tax. But at its core it represented interest-based and class-based farmer-labor politics. In comparative transatlantic terms, the Populist vision of a “cooperative commonwealth” to be realized by way of majoritarian electoral democracy, shared ideological terrain with other labor and evolutionary socialist movements. By the turn of the century, as the People’s Party collapsed, ex-Populists forged a key constituency of the Socialist Party. Other ex-Populists helped to consolidate factions that pursued labor, farmer, and other reform agendas within both the Democratic and Republican Parties. These farmer-labor and social-democratic traditions played a critical role in early twentieth-century state building and in the development of the New Deal, and they continued to be felt in Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society and beyond.”⁶⁴

But the term “populism” today is, in Postel’s words, “applied promiscuously by journalists and a section of scholarly analysts who have the tag at the ready for political phenomena that either escape easy labels or whose easy labels somehow have less cachet than populism seems to have.”⁶⁵

One of the more ludicrous recent examples of this phenomenon, for any historian of Populism, might be the *New York Times* application of the term to 2017 Alabama Senate candidate Roy Moore.⁶⁶ One is hard-pressed to find any commonality between the original Populists and Moore, or, for that matter, Donald Trump. Populism in its day stood for a bi-racial alliance of struggling farmers and workers (including supporters of women’s suffrage and assorted socialists) united in support for equal citizenship rights, government regulation of corporations, government-created money, antitrust policy, anti-corruption, anti-militarism, and anti-elitism generally. An early social democratic reform movement,

⁶⁴ Charles Postel, “The American Populist and Anti-Populist Legacy,” in *Transformations of Populism in Europe and the Americas*, eds. John Abromeit, Bridget Chesterton, Gary Marotta, and York Norman (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 116. See also the seminal tome on Populism by Lawrence Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise: The Populist Moment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976); and a good recent summary of Populist-major party relationships in Daniel Schlozman, *When Movements Anchor Parties* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 109–19.

⁶⁵ Postel, *ibid.*, 117.

⁶⁶ “Mr. Moore is a populist, and though not much of a public speaker – his speeches come across less as fiery stemwinders than after-dinner lectures from a stern, know-it-all grandpa – he is blessed with a talent for showmanship...” “Alabama Senate Race...” (multiple authors), *NYT*, December 12, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/12/us/politics/alabama-senate-election-moore.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=first-column-region®ion=top-news&WT.nav=top-news>.

Populism “placed on the national political agenda redistributive policies by way of an aggressive expansion of federal power...[envisioning] a rationalized mixed economy with a larger role played by both state-owned and cooperative industries than was the case in the American corporate model.”⁶⁷

And yet, the term as used today in the liberal US and European media most often refers to dangerous reactionary anti-immigrant buffoonery. Even contemporary political scientists and other scholars with little knowledge of historic American Populism seem persuaded by the 1950s–1960s arguments of Richard Hofstadter and other pluralists who compared Populism to fascism and McCarthyism.⁶⁸ This disparagement calls to mind the fear with which late-19th century elites confronted the original Populism and the 1896 Democratic and Populist champion, William Jennings Bryan.⁶⁹ It suggests a broad fear of any democratic movement.⁷⁰

Nevertheless, given the events of 2016, and the continuing growth of inequality, one might still imagine the emergence of a new movement on the left that would subsume identity issues like race and gender as they were encompassed

⁶⁷ Postel, “The American Populist and Anti-Populist Legacy,” 118.

⁶⁸ Anton Jaeger, “The Myth of ‘Populism’: It’s the transatlantic commentariat’s favorite political put-down. It’s also historically illiterate.” *Jacobin*, Jan. 3, 2018. <https://jacobinmag.com/2018/01/populism-douglas-hofstadter-donald-trump-democracy>; and “The Semantic drift: Images of Populism in American historiography and their relevance for (European) political science,” *Constellations* 24, (2017) 310–23. An elegant statement of the distinction between the principles and strategies of historical Populism and critical assessments by later theorists, can be found in Jason Frank, “Populism and Praxis,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, eds. Cristobal Rovira Kaltwasser and Paul A. Taggard (NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), 629–43.

⁶⁹ Michael Kazin, *A Godly Hero: The Life of William Jennings Bryan* (NY: Knopf, 2006), 63–79; Louis W. Koenig, *Bryan* (NY: Capricorn Books, 1975), 231–36; and Elizabeth Sanders, *Roots of Reform: Farmers, Workers and the American State, 1877–1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 138–47. Private universities and public intellectuals were overwhelmingly hostile to the 1896 Democratic/Populist candidate, apparently sharing the view of Bryan’s Republican opponents that he was an “anarchist” whose victory would bring into the cabinet men like Altgeld and Debs, and would mean “the country’s immediate and utter damnation.” At Yale, the candidate was greeted with catcalls, an egging and a brass band to drown out his speech. Bryan responded that one shouldn’t blame the Yale boys: “Their fathers, some of whom have gotten rich by the oppression of the poor, have threatened their employees with discharge if they vote their convictions.” (Koenig, 231–35).

⁷⁰ As Simon Johnson argues, “there is still an undercurrent of resistance in Washington to policy ideas with widespread popular support. For example, when President Obama said to leading bankers in March 2009, “My administration is the only thing between you and the pitchforks,” he was suggesting that people favoring a resolution process for large financial institutions – closing them down in an orderly fashion – were akin to some kind of a peasants’ revolt.” Simon Johnson, “When Populism is Sound,” *NYT*, March 15, 2012. <http://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/03/15/when-populism-is-sound/>.

in the early Populism: behind a broader banner of democratic and class-based reform, one that would be an alternative to the two Gilded Age models as well as the identity-focused protests of Democrats today.

As James Galbraith summarizes the current Democratic dilemma, The Democratic Party “retains a strong position on the two coasts and the weaknesses are evident in the fact that it doesn’t have a strong position practically anywhere else....[which] works very much to the disadvantage of the Democratic Party because the US constitutional system gives extra weight to small states, to rural areas.... The Democratic Party has failed to maintain a national base of political organization and has become a party that is largely responsive to a reasonably affluent, socially progressive professional class, and that is not a winning constituency in US national elections.”⁷¹

A renewed class politics might include policies like support for a less convoluted legal path to union organization (or experimenting with inclusive German style Works Councils), resistance to antidemocratic, worker-unfriendly trade agreements; an immigration compromise that might include citizenship for immigrants brought to the US as children, with legal but not citizenship status for their parents, while reducing illegal immigration via border controls and/or employer sanctions; free technical and university education to increase upward mobility; rural revival policies like aid to organic farmers, internet access, tourism, and new forms of industrialization; and a universal health care system.

A Constitutional amendment to repeal *Citizens United*, and party agreements to return to public funding of presidential campaigns would be consonant with the new Populism, and might be attractive to both parties (as was the last major campaign finance reform, the McCain-Feingold Act), given the experiences of 2016. Party rules and state laws that restrict and encumber voting participation have no place in a renewed populist politics. Nor do a huge military apparatus and 800 bases around the world, or a trillion dollar nuclear weapons modernization. Much money could also be saved for alternative purposes, and much human suffering could be avoided if US presidents would forego illegal military intervention and seek cuts to military spending like those embraced in the mid-1970s and early 1990s.

We live in interesting times. It will take attention to larger questions and methods other than survey data to understand them. Political scientists need to focus on how party and formal governmental institutions work, and explore the political economy and social contracts that underlie democratic politics. They will have to consider how robotization – not just for manufacturing but also affecting White collar workers, expanding into the professional classes and

71 James Galbraith, “The US Democratic Party After The Election of Donald Trump,” in *Social Democracy: a SWOT Analysis*, Social Europe Dossier, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 54–63.

putting hundreds of millions out of work in the process⁷² – is going to affect the reconfiguration of parties. Certainly there will still be the Duvergerian haves and have-nots, and far more of the latter. Who will speak for the disadvantaged in this brave new world?

⁷² Siddharta Mukherjee, “A.I. Versus M.D: What happens when diagnosis is automated?” *New Yorker*, April 3, 2017. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/04/03/ai-versus-md>.