Why Donald Trump? Keys to Understanding
An Extraordinary Presidential Race

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The election of 2016 has no precedent in modern American history. The meaning of an election for a restrained conception of democratic leadership, one equal to the task of leading the world's greatest power, constitutes the essence of a presidential race. Were the criteria met? It was a long and contentious campaign. The issues in the election ranged from domestic anger, alienation and political deadlock to international crises, fundamental concerns that will take insightful and experienced leadership.

The election and more specifically the manner in which it was conducted raises a number of questions. Among these, and among the more fundamental, is whether it is a blip, an aberration and exception in the long life of national elections, the manner in which they have been conducted, and the underlying dynamics that have come to explain the past contests. Or, alternatively, 2016 could be an introduction to future such races, with political parties lacking influence of any magnitude and voter discontent turning to the more radical and unrestrained of candidate alternatives with consequences yet to be seen for the operation of a democratic state.

One thing is clear and that is considerable voter anger in both parties over the manner in which elected officials have largely ignored their real needs, and in particular those associated with the economic well-being of major segments of the population. The discrepancy between the promises and agendas of the candidates and parties over the last half century and the operations and priorities in office of those who would emerge as the winners in elections has much to do with the level of current discontent. The candidate races in both parties in a strikingly different manner serve to illustrate the point.

The outcome of the election was unexpected. It ranks as one of the major upsets in American history. Its full importance will not be known for years but it could have radical, even seismic, consequences for the future of the United States.

The Candidates and Their Campaigns

The election pitted two candidates and parties, Donald J. Trump, the Republican party nominee, and Hillary Rodham Clinton, the Democratic nominee, with contrasting personalities, life experiences and personal values as well as polarized conceptions of what government should do and whom it should represent.

Donald Trump and His Campaign: First, there was the newcomer to politics representing the Republican party. Donald J. Trump was a political novice; he had never held office at any level or competed for office in a campaign. He was a New York real estate billionaire, with interests in casinos, apartment houses, office buildings, golf courses and other real estate ventures worldwide. Trump was a surprise winner of the Republican primaries which fielded a group of 17 candidates, mostly minor political figures with a sprinkling of newcomers added. None however had the party following, type of issue they could ride to victory, financing or organization needed to win. Most were also largely unknown. Trump was, among other things, a television personality, the host of a television reality show, "The Apprentice," where Trump became known for uttering the catch phrase "You're fired!" to contestants who failed at game tasks. The show had a wide familiarity among mass audiences.

Trump claimed to have the money needed to finance his own campaign (as against creating Super Pacs or asking for donations). He was also at ease in front of large audiences, had a quick response to almost everything and knew how to package complex ideas in a few pointed, if often angry, words. He was not interested in the details of policy concerns as such. What he did – through default or planning – was to appeal to white voters, less educated and generally less well-off than most, bypassed by the economic gains of recent decades. He managed to tap

into their anger and frustration; their sense of being left behind as the rest of the country did increasingly better; their belief that minorities were getting preference for jobs at their expense; and their fear of multiculturalism, that the America they had known was passing. Above all was the sense of not being represented by the candidates for national office. They were isolated, ignored and exploited. Trump spoke to their concerns, acknowledged their alienation and gave voice to their frustrations. Given this, they proved willing in return to ignore or discount his excesses and failings in exchange for having someone finally speak for them in a national campaign.

Trump did not have much of a campaign organization at any level. He had few close advisors beyond the immediate members of his family. He depended on his own instincts and a sense of what would appeal to the voters that formed his constituency. At the same time, he showed an unusual disregard for the Republican party mainstream or the centrists/moderates believed to be the keys to an electoral victory. His freewheeling, tell-it-like-it-is style could, and did, get him into seemingly endless controversies. If nothing else, they kept Trump in the forefront of television news, fed the cable networks' insatiable demand for material and commanded seemingly endless social media attention.

Donald Trump is a skilled negotiator and a successful businessman who has built an international empire. He is a world-class salesman, a savvy student of a media he uses for his own purposes and he loves success and the personal attention that comes with it. He has shown himself to be an entrepreneur few can match and one who likes to bet big. He prizes winners and, as he has said, hates losers. He has an unchallengeable faith in his own ability and he relies almost exclusively on his own judgment and instincts. These are qualities made clear in the

campaign and likely will guide his domestic policymaking and his international dealings in the presidency.

<u>Hillary Clinton and Her Campaign</u>: Hillary Rodham Clinton has had a long and impressive career in politics. She had been Secretary of State in the Obama administration (2009-2013); first lady during her husband's, Bill Clinton's, presidency; a U.S. Senator from New York (2001-2009); and a candidate for Democratic party nominee for president in 2008, losing a close battle to Barack Obama. In addition, she had been the first lady of Arkansas during her husband's gubernatorial terms (1979-1981 and 1983-1992). The presidential election of 2016 was her second attempt to be the first woman to serve in the White House.

At each stop, she had compiled a list of accomplishments in advancing children's issues, women's rights and improvements in health care, as well as evidencing a commitment to service on an extensive number of legal commissions and committees reforming and modernizing the law and its application. After law school she worked with the Children's Defense Fund and as a staff member of the congressional committee establishing the groundwork for the impeachment of Richard M. Nixon. She ranked as one of the most experienced and best prepared of candidates to ever seek the presidency.

Bill Clinton won the presidency in 1992 with Hillary Clinton's help. Clinton had been accused of a long-term sexual relationship by the woman involved, Gennifer Flowers. Hillary Clinton went on television to defend her husband and Bill Clinton survived the episode. The effort was to be made again when Bill Clinton was accused of having sex in the White House with an intern. He denied the accusation initially and she made an angry television appearance claiming it and a series of other attacks on their character were products of a concentrated

rightwing conspiracy. Bill Clinton later admitted in a brief televised address to an inappropriate relationship with the intern, publicly embarrassing his wife, among others. He was impeached by the House but acquitted by the Senate on the two articles of impeachment, perjury and obstruction of justice, allowing him to remain in office. The incident was believed to be the most critical point in a frequently contentious relationship between the Clintons. The controversies involving her husband and later those surrounding the funding and operations of the Clinton Foundation helped shape the image Hillary Clinton carried over in her presidential bid.

As first lady, Hillary Clinton was an active advisor on a range of issues. She was given responsibility for developing a national health care plan. After two years of work, the proposed plan failed to win congressional approval. She blamed the defeat on the lobbying of health care corporations and the financial indebtedness of legislators to them.

In 2000, her career went in another direction. She was elected the first female senator from New York. Her years in the Senate were notable for her efforts to get $20 billion in federal healthcare and other aid for the police and service workers who responded to the 9/11 World Trade Center bombings; a determination to stimulate economic development in the poor and rural areas of New York state; and her continued concern with children and women's issues (Borchers 2016). She was reelected in 2006 with 67 percent of the vote.

In 2008 she ran for president. In retrospect, she may have made the mistake of continuing to serve as senator from New York, a position she worked on virtually full time, while also attempting to run for the Democratic party's nomination for president. Her campaign concentrated power in a competing circle of advisors. They did not get along with each other and had different strategies for the campaign. Between them, they managed to use most of her political financing before the delegate selection process began. Consequently, she was relatively

underfunded compared with her adversary, Barack Obama. Her campaign underestimated the strength of the Obama challenge and never quite overcame its initial mistakes. She ended up losing a race in which she had been the heavy favorite. After the election, surprising many, she agreed to serve as Obama's Secretary of State.

In her 2016 race, Clinton constantly contrasted her record and experience in government with Trump's lack of it, his business ventures and his focus on a television reality show. In an election with the need for change as the undercurrent, her years of experience may actually not have helped. She could be seen, as Trump claimed, as part of the problem, a representative of the status quo. It may well have played to his self-designated role as the outsider and agent for change.

Careers, personalities, backgrounds, values, ideologies, the temperaments of the candidates, all came to shape the race for the presidency to an extent that went well beyond the ordinary. The nominees were unlike in everything from gender to their belief as to what American government stood for and what its role and mission should be. All of this would come to mark the highly unusual campaign that followed.

One final thing about the candidates: neither Hillary Clinton nor Donald J. Trump were trusted by large numbers of the American public. Taken together, they may well have been the two most unpopular candidates to run in a presidential election since the polls measured such things (Chozick and Thee-Brenan 2016). Gallup polling conducted October 31-November 5, 2016 showed Clinton at 57% unfavorable and Trump 62% unfavorable (Gallup 2016).

<div align="center">The Nomination Phase</div>

The race to select the parties' nominees, like the general election to come, established basic constraints in approach. With no incumbent of either party seeking reelection, it was an

open race. These usually draw a large number of prospective nominees. Such was the case with the Republicans. The Democratic party appeared to have its candidate decided as early as two years before the election. Hillary Clinton, the loser in a close primary fight to Barack Obama in 2008, appeared to have the Democratic party's full support.

The Democrats: Clinton had left her position as Secretary of State in the Obama administration to run for president. She had a well-funded campaign in place, led by a Super Pac that began early to build a financial base for her run and, not incidentally, to scare off other prospective opponents who might have considered running. She had a professional organization in place, with a formidable ground organization both in the nomination and general election races; she had national name recognition and an impressive political résumé; she could count on the support of the Democratic party activists who decide such outcomes; and she was popular with the party's base. Clinton would also be the first female presidential nominee of a major party and, if elected, the first woman president, as she put it breaking the glass ceiling. Everything it would seem was in order. She was seen as the presumptive nominee and projected to go on to win the presidency.

Clinton had no serious opposition within the party for its nomination, or so it would appear. Unexpectedly, Bernie Sanders, a U.S. Senator from Vermont, unknown nationally, and in fact calling himself an Independent (actually a "Democratic Socialist") decided to oppose Clinton and bring a new and more progressive message to the campaign. He met with the Democratic party caucus in the Senate and normally voted with the Democratic party. Sanders was 74 years old, had no national reputation in any particular policy area; and was not organized or funded at the beginning of his campaign. In declaring his intention to contest Clinton for the party's nomination Sanders was to put forth a decidedly more liberal policy agenda in an effort

to begin what he referred to as a "political revolution." In reality, his program was closer to an updated New Deal/Great Society agenda. It was one the Democratic party had moved away from. This occurred most significantly during the Bill Clinton presidency and his administrative embrace of a more business-friendly, Wall Street economic approach in his efforts to push the Democratic party in a new direction.

A year before the election, Sanders was undecided as to if he would run, announcing late. He was given no chance to win the Democratic nomination. It was unclear even after he began campaigning and he started to bring in large crowds to his rallies if he really wanted to be president. He said that his objective was to end economic polarization and the accumulation of the nation's wealth in the hands of a small number of billionaires; better equalize the income distribution and reward the working classes left out of the economic recovery that followed the 2007-2008 Great Recession. In addition, he proposed cutting college costs for students, which appealed to the Millennials who formed a base for his campaign; fight the abuses of globalization most evident in the international trade agreements supported by both Republicans and Democrats (including Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton) that had moved jobs out of the country and penalized both the working class and labor unions; and speak for those ignored by the political class that ruled Washington. These were issues he had concerned himself with since his early days growing up in Brooklyn, as mayor of Burlington, VT, and as a congressman and senator.

Sanders' message was popular with Democrats, especially liberals and the young Millennials, who believed themselves unrepresented by the Clinton campaign. They were suspicious of her ties to Wall Street and the financial industry. She had received $675,000 for three speeches from Goldman Sachs alone. Estimations were that the Clintons taken together

had made $125 million from talks they gave since Bill Clinton had left office in 2001. It was to become a campaign issue.

Sanders began to attract large crowds, turned out to be an effective speaker with an ability to draw in his listeners and to motivate them; and, in a short period of time, became an unexpected sensation among sectors of the Democratic coalition dissatisfied with both economic conditions in a class-biased system and the records of previous Democratic presidents, notably Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, in these regards. Sanders' message had some relation to what Trump was saying but his appeal was centered within more traditional groups of Democratic party identifiers.

Clinton was slow to recognize the potential seriousness of the Sanders campaign, much as she had been slow to recognize the threat of the Obama challenge in 2008. Nonetheless, she had the funding, professional organization and intra-party support needed to win the nomination. She also had the support of the controversial "Super Delegates" (awarded national convention seats based on their elective or party position) who did not have to compete for their seats in the primaries and caucuses. Virtually all had committed to Clinton.

Sanders did raise money for his campaign, amounting to over $236 million. It was less than half that raised by the Clinton campaign (Federal Election Commission 2016). Throughout his campaign Sanders claimed that his average donation was small, $27. He was to win 23 states and Democrats Abroad, for a total of 1,865 delegates and 43.1 percent of the prenomination vote. Clinton won 34 states and territories, and 2,842 of the total 4,763 delegate votes (or 55.2%).

Martin O'Malley, a former governor of Maryland, had also run for the nomination. He participated in the primary debates but received little support. Among other potential candidates who did not run, most notably was Vice President Joe Biden. He was still grieving the death of

his son in May of 2015. While Biden would have presented the most serious challenge to Clinton, they had often been on opposing sides of domestic and foreign policy issues, including the invasion of Libya, in the Obama administration. It is uncertain whether he could have beaten her formidable advantages in financing and organization.

The Republicans: The Republican field included 17 "serious" candidates. There was no acknowledged frontrunner. In the year prior to the election, Chris Christie, governor of a "blue state," New Jersey, and believed to have mainstream party support as well as potentially cross-party appeal among disaffected Democrats, was considered a frontrunner. Additionally Jeb Bush, the brother of one president and the son of another as well as a former governor of Florida, was expected to seek the nomination. Given his network of funders, party officials, policy experts and consultants, he also was considered to be a mainstream contender and by many the potential nominee, posing a "clash of dynasties," Bushes and Clintons, for the presidency. While Christie and Bush did run unsuccessfully, Mitt Romney, the 2012 Republican nominee, considered to be another potential candidate, declined. Romney did come to severely criticize the eventual nominee, Donald Trump, in a number of talks throughout the campaign period.

Christie withdrew from the race on February 10, 2016, a day after an embarrassing sixth place finish in the New Hampshire primary. He received only 7 percent of the vote and won no delegates. He was also the subject of a criminal investigation into a massive, five-day, traffic tie-up on the George Washington Bridge, known as "Bridgegate." It had been created by Christie's office in retribution to the mayor of Fort Lee, NJ, the town that bore the brunt of the traffic jam, who had refused to support Christie's reelection. Jeb Bush did announce on June 15, 2015. He came to be seen as an ineffective campaigner and was the butt of Trump barbs as to his "low

energy" campaign. He had no message that distinguished his candidacy and before withdrawing had his mother and brother campaign for him. Their involvement in his campaign may have sent a mixed message. His mother had warned early on that Jeb Bush's seeking the Republican nomination may be one Bush too many. His brother, George W. Bush, had initiated the war against Saddam Hussein and Iraq in 2003 and presided over the economic collapse of 2007-1008. He ended his presidency as one of the most disliked in the post-World War II period.

With Christie and Bush removing themselves from the race, the field was wide open. The race then came to focus on Senator Ted Cruz of Texas, elected as a Tea Party candidate in 2012, an evangelical and strong conservative, who was to offer the most consistent threat to Trump. He suspended his campaign on May 3 after losing the Indiana primary to Trump. Additionally, John Kasich, governor of Ohio, a critical state in the election, a conservative/centrist with mainstream backing also remained unofficially in the race until the national convention although he had suspended his campaign on May 4. He won his home state of Ohio but little else.

Other aspirants for the nomination:

- Mike Huckabee, evangelical preacher, Fox News commentator, former Arkansas governor and a previous candidate for the nomination with a down-home demeanor;

- Senator Rand Paul (KY), a libertarian and surgeon whose father Rep. Ron Paul of Texas had sought the Republican nomination in earlier races;

- Rick Perry, governor of Texas, a conservative who had run previously for the nomination and a proponent of oil, gas and coal interests;

- Senator Marco Rubio (FL), a Latino candidate, elected as a Tea Party member with a Tea Party agenda in 2010 to the Senate and a former Speaker of the House in the Florida legislature. He presented himself as a less controversial, more mainstream alternative to

Trump. He made little note of his earlier agenda, instead emphasizing God, the

Constitution, Second Amendment rights (gun ownership) and family in his rallies. He

also had the worst attendance record in the Senate which became an issue. His response

was that it was not worth his time. Trump ridiculed him as "Little Marco" and questioned

in the Fox News debates what he had done to qualify as a presidential candidate. Christie,

a former prosecutor, in a withering attack, mocked Rubio's carefully prepared responses

to questions and their lack of content, in both UTube satirical videos as well as during the

February 6 debate. The attacks unsettled Rubio. Once considered a potential front-runner

by the Clinton campaign and by the media, he began to robotically repeat himself in the

debate. He removed himself from the race after losing his home state Florida's primary to

Trump on March 15. He was to be reelected however to the Senate in 2016.

- Scott Walker, governor of Wisconsin, a conservative and Koch brothers' favorite who
  had funded his state campaigns. In return he championed their state legislative initiatives
  (ALEC) and anti-union policies. He promised to build a wall along the Canadian border
  to keep immigrants out;

- Rick Santorum, a former Pennsylvania U.S. Senator and presidential candidate,
  representing a moral (Roman Catholic) social conservative point of view;

- Carly Fiorina, former CEO of Hewlett Packard and unsuccessful 2010 candidate for the
  U.S. Senate from California, the only woman in the Republican race;

- Dr. Ben Carson, a retired neurosurgeon with no political experience. When asked in the
  first Fox News debate his qualifications for the presidency he said he was the only
  candidate who had separated twins conjoined at the head;

- Bobby Jindal, former conservative governor of Louisiana, who had inherited a state with billions of dollars surplus in the treasury. He left it bankrupt while cutting health, education, emergency funds and other services;

- George Pataki, a former governor of New York state, with little name recognition, even in the Republican party;

- Senator Lindsay Graham of South Carolina, an experienced senator knowledgeable on foreign policy and a committed conservative, little known outside of Washington; and

- Jim Gilmore, a former governor of Virginia and the only candidate with military experience.

Declining to run, in addition to Romney, the 2012 Republican candidate, was Mike Pence, governor of Indiana, an evangelical and anti-abortion, anti-gay advocate. Later he was to be named as Trump's running mate and after a stoic appearance in the vice presidential debate was projected by a number of analysts to be a front-runner for the Republican nomination in 2020 (Trump at this point in the campaign was believed to be losing). Also declining to run was Speaker Paul Ryan (WI), the highest-ranking Republican in the country, the party's vice presidential nominee in 2012, and a conservative budget specialist; as well as other lesser known possibilities.

A number of the Republican candidates (including Rubio, Cruz and Walker) sought financing for their campaigns from billionaires with the money and motivation to invest. The consequences of the Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United* (2010) came into play in the 2016 presidential race. The Koch brothers alone promised to invest $889 million, a sum on par with that to be spent by each of the major political parties, in such contests. Apparently, with

Trump's nomination, his command of television and his personal wealth, the Kochs placed their money primarily in state and local races.

Such financing, when given, would be earned. The candidates chosen would be expected to advance their benefactors' conservative economic agenda and immediate business interests. For those billionaires who felt strongly on the issue, support for Benjamin Netanyahu and his conservative Likud party agenda in Israel was demanded. One of Trump's campaign pledges that proved effective was that since he himself was a billionaire, unlike the others he could finance his own campaign and could not be bought. Another was that in relation to Washington and officials of government, he vowed to "drain the swamp."

The Republican nomination process received extensive media coverage, especially through a series of early debates that took place in the year before the formal selection process began. Fox News, with a reputation as the conservative news source, sponsored the debates. Given the size of the field, the network designated an "A" list and a "B" list of contenders. The "A" list appeared on the evening debates and therefore drew the greatest number of viewers. The "B" list debate took place earlier in the day and drew considerably fewer viewers or media coverage. Fox News decided the division based on poll results as to who would appear in the evening debates. Those candidates polling lower numbers (mostly 1 to 2% or so) appeared in the earlier program. In effect, and responding to levels of name recognition in the earliest going, Fox News placed itself in the position of choosing, and then promoting, the candidacy of those it selected.

The television exposure particularly suited Trump. He was a veteran TV performer, at ease in front of the camera. Given such a venue, he excelled and with the televised debates, his constant Tweets, the leverage of social media and free media coverage his campaign received he

in time came to the front of the field. Initially dismissed by forecasters, media analysts and the Clinton campaign itself, he had been given no chance. He won by rewriting the rules. He invested little in paid television until well into the general election campaign and given his television appeal and his unpredictability (making for good TV), managed to effectively counter both his primary competitors and in the general election Clinton's funding advantage and solid ground organization.

The Democrats held three debates between Sanders and Clinton. These were scheduled by the Democratic National Committee. The Sanders' people complained that the number was kept deliberately low and the scheduling less than ideal in order to promote Clinton's candidacy and limit Sanders' opportunities to get his message across. The chair of the Democratic National Committee (DNC), Debbie Wasserman Schultz, was a Clinton supporter as was the man who appointed her, Barack Obama.

There were other quarrels with the DNC and its chair over access to voting and election data meant to be available to all candidates. It was shut off to the Sanders campaign at one point, but given the controversy that ensue quickly restored. Leaked emails released by WikiLeaks appeared to support claims of bias on the part of the DNC. The claim was made with a "high degree" of certainty by the government and its national security agencies that Russia was behind the leaks. The charges as to the manipulation were never fully investigated during the campaign; the charges as to Russian attempts to influence the race, allegedly against Clinton and in favor of Trump, while never proven during the campaign, received the major share of media attention. Post-election the Clinton campaign argued the FBI should have focused on the hacking and charges of Russian interference in the election rather than on her use of a private email server while in office, which it considered a minor matter and a political distraction.

The National Conventions

The Democratic National Convention was a sophisticated, Hollywood-style spectacle, held July 25-28, 2016 in Philadelphia. It ran smoothly and the tone was upbeat and positive. It provided both entertainment and speeches in carefully moderated doses in a fast-moving, made-for-television show. Local and state politicians and office-seekers were given their brief moment; high-profile celebrities, actors and entertainers were slotted at set intervals; and political figures, from members of Congress to governors and past candidates for office, made appearances. The speakers emphasized Clinton's qualifications and the "temperamental unsuitability" of Donald Trump for the office of president and the position of Commander-in-Chief with his finger on the nuclear button. It was a theme pushed hard in the early stages of the campaign by Clinton and her surrogates. All in all, it was a well-conceived and expertly executed convention that stood in contrast to the less synchronized, lower wattage Republican effort.

To win the nomination, Clinton needed 2,382 delegates of the 4,763 certified for the roll call vote on July 26. She received 2,842. She had incorporated into the party platform the agreements on international trade; plans to reduce college costs, including free tuition at public universities; and her programs to revise tax and budgetary policy to ensure a greater equalization of wealth in the society; as well as a promise to oppose international trade agreements (once supported) to protect worker and union rights. All were pledges made to Bernie Sanders and his supporters. The platform was seen to be the most progressive in the Democratic party's history. The Democrats left the convention unified and enthused and, while expecting a close fight, believing they held the upper hand.

The Republican National Convention took place July 18-21 in Cleveland, Ohio. It came across as a disorganized affair with few recognizable participants and the speeches mostly by a series of largely unknown figures. Vice Presidential nominee Mike Spence made a presentation as did a number of military leaders, later to appear as Cabinet nominees or aspirants. Trump's daughter Ivanka and wife Melania, and other family members made appearances. Melania Trump's speech caused a minor media sensation when she adopted phrases from Michele Obama's talk at the 2008 Democratic National Convention without acknowledging the source (she later said it was unintentional).

The Republican platform received little attention, which was a mistake. It was a Far Right road map, largely a reincorporation of Reagan neoliberal economic policies and commitments. Trump did make made clear in his campaign his commitment to a heavy investment in military defense and nuclear weaponry and to institute an aggressive foreign policy. The outlines of the Trump presidency to come could be found in this document (Republican Platform 2016).
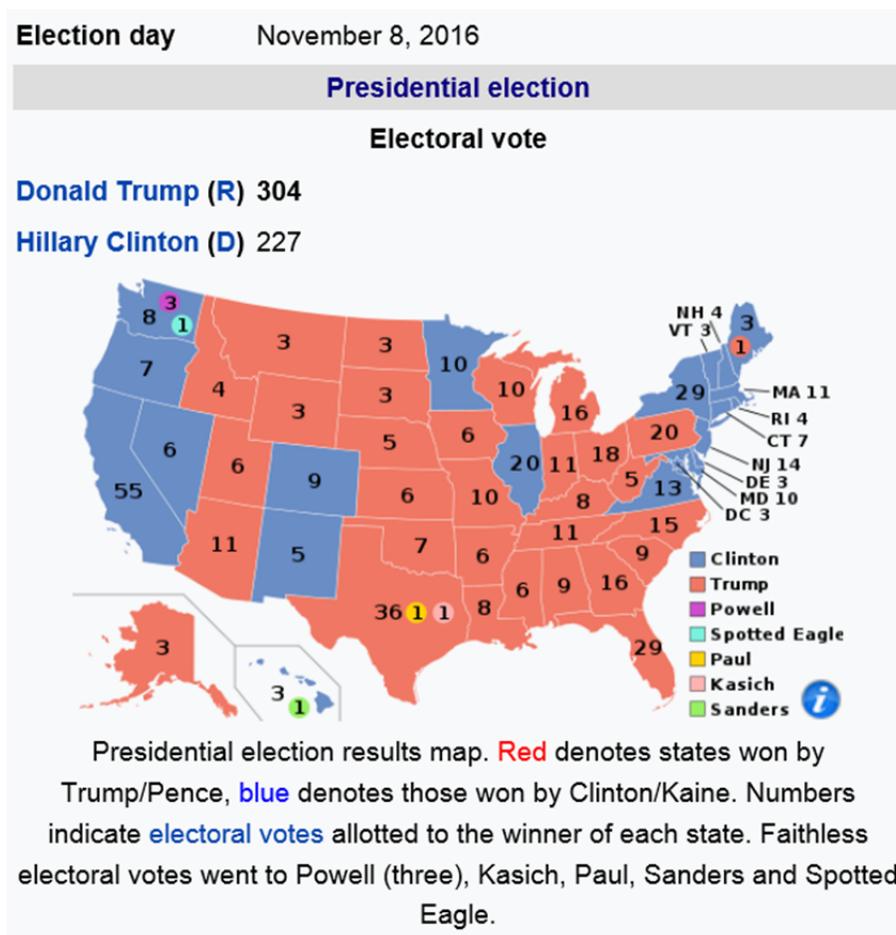
The General Election

There is a structure to presidential elections not found in the primaries or in state or local races, the Electoral College. It is a constitutional process that awards a state's general election vote to candidates largely but not totally on a winner-take-all basis (there are variations in several states). Each state is allocated the same vote in the Electoral College as it has total representatives in the Congress. The intention of the Founders was to ensure state representation in the selection process and to moderate a direct vote for president. The result has been a skewing of the national vote to over-represent the smaller states at the expense of the larger ones. There is no guarantee that a candidate who wins a majority of the votes cast will win a majority

of the Electoral College delegates. In fact, quite the opposite. In 2016, Clinton became the

second Democratic candidate this century, and the 5th since the country was founded (if you

count Andrew Jackson who founded the Democratic party as a result of this issue) to win the

popular vote but lose the Electoral College vote and the presidency.

The Electoral College, whatever its faults, does impose a structure on presidential

campaign that is all but immutable. The Democratic party's strength in election after election is

found on the East Coast, New England, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Washington, D.C.

and normally Pennsylvania, and on the West Coast, Washington State, Oregon, California and in

2016 Nevada. The Democrats in 2016 also took New Mexico and Colorado. An area of strength

normally is the industrial states of the Midwest but Clinton won only Minnesota and Illinois,

losing the Rust Belt states of Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa, Indiana and Ohio to Trump. Several

other states can be in play in the South and Border states, including Florida, depending on

economic conditions, the candidates and their appeal and the major concerns of the time. Mostly

these states and the rest of the country are Republican strongholds. The design of the Electoral

College over-rewards the Republican candidate. The electoral map for 2016, given the selective

nature of the Democratic appeal in major population centers, looks like a sea of red (Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1
Presidential Election Results

Presidential election results map. Red denotes states won by Trump/Pence, blue denotes those won by Clinton/Kaine. Numbers indicate electoral votes allotted to the winner of each state. Faithless electoral votes went to Powell (three), Kasich, Paul, Sanders and Spotted Eagle.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_elections,_2016

Given this alignment, the two parties' strategies are clear. They determine the states to be cultivated as the core of the campaign, the states considered to be potentially winnable (if longshots) and those to be essentially conceded to the opposition. There are always several surprises but the overall outline and strategic focus remains much the same over time, as it did in the 2016 race. Within this dictated electoral structure, the personal campaign appeal of the candidates (both unpopular) and their campaign skills predicted to a tight campaign and a close final vote.

Both candidates had their liabilities. Among Clinton's were her ties to the Clinton Foundation, headed by Chelsea Clinton, which Democratic party leaders attempted unsuccessfully to have her end. The WikiLeaks (allegedly Russian) release of emails showed donors to the foundation requested meetings with Clinton while Secretary of State which were granted. Clinton also had voted for the war in Iraq in 2003 while in the Senate. Trump used this against her and claimed he had opposed the war from the beginning, charging it was a terrible mistake (others claimed he initially supported it and later changed his mind). The issue of the war in Iraq continued to divide voters, given that it had fed into other conflicts, including that in Afghanistan, the longest war in U.S. history. Trump and other Republicans also held Clinton personally responsible for advising the president to attack Libya and the chaos and terrorism (especially that involving ISIS) that followed. Clinton was held responsible for providing the poor security that led to the death of four state department officials in Benghazi (her response, which received little media attention, was that a Republican Congress would not fund security). She was also severely criticized for her use of a private mail server while Secretary of State. While not illegal at the time, the argument was that she might have made classified information available to an enemy. This was never shown despite a number of congressional committee investigations by a Republican Congress, plus one 11-hour session by Clinton before an intelligence committee of the Congress. An FBI investigation initially found no laws broken. The director of the FBI in the press conference at the time did criticize her for "extremely careless" behavior, an unusual addition to the normal termination of an FBI inquiry. The report was released in July, 2016. Seemingly this should have ended the matter, but it did not. The issue was used against Clinton throughout the campaign and was given new life in the final days of electioneering when the FBI announced it was reopening its email investigation.

Both candidates campaigned relentlessly. Clinton had a ground organization that Trump did not come close to matching. She also had ample financing and bought heavily in major television markets. Trump did employ a strategy of selectively buying television time late in the campaign but did not have the funds available (he did little fundraising and largely depended on the Republican National Committee to raise what financing he needed). He received free if often critical television and print exposure that had the effect of making an invaluable contribution to his election effort. His outgoing personality, impetuous nature and lack of restraint as to who he would attack or how made for exciting television, if not in the traditional manner of former candidates.

<u>The Debates</u>

An essential part of the campaign were the televised debates. Hillary Clinton had a reputation for thorough preparation, in addition to a clear and well developed appreciation of the policy agenda of the campaign. She demonstrated this in the debates. Her biggest negative in this context was her delivery. While professional, it lacked the charisma and drama associated with Trump. His behavior in the debates and elsewhere and his willingness to attack, create controversy and unnerve opponents was an approach that had been honed in the primary debates and then carried over into the general election.

There was one other aspect of the Trump approach that directly influenced his debate performance. He did not like to prepare and went out of his way, despite consistent efforts by his campaign staff, to avoid pre-debate practice sessions. Beginning a debate, he could be calm and seem presidential for brief periods of time but would soon revert back to the form that had served him well. He depended primarily on instinct and his perception of events and his evaluation of

his opponents and what he believed to be their weaknesses. It was a carry-over from his business negotiations and he was very good at it. He directed accusations and personal comments at his opponents. These were intended to both rattle them, elicit a response (none could compete with him effectively in such exchanges) and move the debate to a format he both felt more comfortable in dealing with and excelled at.

Along his positions during the campaign and the debates, Trump promised he would build a wall across the Mexican border to keep rapists and killers out of the United States and that the cost would be paid by Mexico. The idea was to appeal to Trump supporters, anxious to decrease violence in cities and, again, fearful of losing jobs and of the multicultural nation America was becoming. Trump also promised to reinstate "stop and frisk" police procedures in cities. His argument was they had worked in New York City in the 1990s under Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, a vocal Trump supporter, and they would work again. Such practices are heavily discriminatory against blacks and other minorities. That practice as conducted in New York had been declared unconstitutional by a federal judge in 2013 in terms of its application. Trump also lashed out against a Muslim American lawyer, Khizr Kahn, and his wife Ghazala. The Khans were a "Gold Star" family, having lost a son in the war in Iraq. This also caused a sensation, although Khan had spoken out against Trump at the Democratic National Convention nominating Hillary Clinton and also in campaign rallies.

Given all of this, the first presidential debate on September 26, 2016 was much anticipated. Trump demonstrated the characteristics that defined his campaign. He appeared unprepared and spent his time on angry attacks against his opponent and conditions in the country in general. He had little new to offer in terms of policy concerns and largely avoided such issues. Clinton was more reserved and her demeanor more recognizable from the debates in

other presidential years. She emphasized her issue positions to the extent she could while directing her own criticisms at Trump. One barb that struck home concerned Trump's past criticisms of a former Miss Universe's weight (he owned the Miss Universe pageant at the time). He had gone so far as to take the woman to a gym to work out with the media invited to watch (Johnson 2016).

During the campaign, the woman supported Clinton and accused Trump of having called her "Miss Piggy" and "Miss Housekeeping," among other things. The surfacing of this story appeared to infuriate Trump and he found it difficult to move off of the topic. Megyn Kelly, a Fox News commentator and host of one of the early pre-nomination debates, had attacked him during the debate, and Trump later responded saying "there was blood coming out of her eyes, blood coming out of her wherever." It was a strange episode that led to much criticism. Trump was accused of being a misogynist with frequent statements about women's looks and dress, and a known history of occasionally ranking them on a 1 to 10 scale in media interviews. A few days after the debate, Trump sent out a series of tweets in the middle of the night again criticizing the Miss Universe winner and, as he was often to do, expressing unedited views on whatever concerned him. The attacks were used by the media and Clinton as an example of his disdain for women more generally.

Clinton won the debate in the polls overwhelmingly. The size of the television audience, 84 million, set a new record for presidential debate viewership. Several million additional viewers followed the exchanges on social media. The three presidential debates and one vice presidential debate taken as a whole reached an estimated 259 million viewers according to Nielson Media Research, a new record.

On October 2, just prior to the second debate scheduled for October 4, the *New York Times* released a story on Trump's business failures and tax problems (Barstow, Craig, Buettner and Twohey 2016). It would cause a major sensation in the campaign. The newspaper reported that it had received a copy of Trump's tax returns for 1995 which showed he had declared a $916 million business loss for the year. The *Times* reported that this discovery meant Trump could legally avoid paying federal taxes based on this loss for 18 years, assuming a write-off on an income of $50 million per year over that time period. Trump had refused to release his tax returns, saying that they were under audit (although this by itself would not stop their release). For several decades, presidents and other presidential candidates had customarily made their tax returns (all or in part) public.

The *Times* reported that Trump had experienced severe financial difficulties in the 1980s and early 1990s. Further he lost other real estate properties and reportedly sought Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection for various of his business operations on a number of occasions. He himself did not lose money.

After extensive consideration, the banks, pension funds, hedge funds and investment corporations that had put money into Trump's businesses decided to keep Trump on a retainer. He would not own the companies, casinos, hotels or real estate with the Trump name on them, but he would be given a sum for the use of his name and he would manage some of them. They believed they would benefit more from using the Trump name for marketing purposes than engaging in an extensive legal effort to recoup their money (Buettner and Bagli 2016).

Also in regard to the $918 million in tax deferments for his losses, Trump's argument was that "crooked Hillary" or "corrupt Hillary" had been in government and in Congress for six

years and should have changed the tax laws and that he was simply taking advantage of the law as it was.

Trump had built his appeal for "Making America Great Again" on the basis of his widespread business success. His argument was that he had the skills to negotiate with China and Russia as well as NATO to get better deals for America. He contended that international trade agreements, such as NAFTA and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) that President Obama had negotiated and was trying to have adopted, hurt the working man. These he (and Bernie Sanders) said took jobs away from Americans and cut workers out of the economic benefits that came to favor others. It was a powerful argument and it appealed to the constituency Trump had targeted.

His business failures struck at the very heart of his appeal as a wealthy and successful billionaire with the knowledge and skills to reshape the American economy; reward those at the lower levels of the economic hierarchy, ignored and exploited over the decades; and, as a consequence, return the United States to its former greatness.

As it turned out, Trump continued to manage his business interests while he was running for president. After the election, he indicated also that he would continue as an executive producer of the NBC reality TV show, "Celebrity Apprentice."

If this was not enough, a few days later, the *Washington Post* released a video tape of Trump a decade earlier at a planned taping of a segment for a Hollywood program in which Trump had agreed to appear (Fahrenthold 2016). In talking to a television personality accompanying him he is quoted as using vulgar language, saying he is "automatically attracted to beautiful [sic] - I just start kissing them. It's like a magnet….. And when you are a star, they let you do it… You can do anything…Grab them by the p---y..." He also recounted how he took a married woman shopping for furniture because he wanted to make advances to her.

The video caused a sensation, the biggest controversy the campaign was to experience and the most difficult single episode Trump had to deal with. His response was that the tape was just "locker room talk", was old (over a decade or so) and did not represent who he was now. By mid- October a dozen women had come forth to claim Trump had sexually harassed or groped them at various times or in different situations (Helderman 2016).

Trump's behavior was severely criticized and the question was raised as to whether he would withdraw from the race. The Republican party was in turmoil, a "civil war" as it was called, with some members withdrawing their support for his candidacy and others questioning the impact his behavior would have on congressional and state races.

Trump's response was to say, as he had in the debate, that rather than withdraw he would make an issue of Bill Clinton's sexual behavior, which he argued was much worse than anything he might have done. This he did. He held a press conference immediately before the second debate featuring four women, three of whom reported they had sexual encounters with the former president and one who said she had been raped as a child by a man Hillary Clinton had defended in a legal action (a *pro bono* case assigned Clinton by an Arkansas judge). Trump then had them seated in the audience for the debate after a squabble was resolved over Trump's original plan to seat them in the VIP box near Bill Clinton.

The format of the second debate was a town hall-style meeting with questions from the audience. Trump walked around the stage, often standing directly behind Clinton, hovering as she spoke in what was interpreted as "uncomfortable," even threatening posturing. He engaged in a series of personal attacks and accusations, this time more effective in disrupting Clinton's issue focus. As for her husband's sexual history, now a campaign issue, she refused to defend or discuss it.

That left the third and final debate of the campaign. The first two had been explosive, and for the media involved, theatrical. More of the same was expected. Trump was again the focal point of attention. He began in a more subdued manner, appearing to read most of his answers, an uncomfortable position for him. After a short interlude, Trump, Clinton and their interaction in the debate returned to the more familiar arguments and personal exchanges, with some effort to contrast what were quite different issue positions thrown in, that had characterized the earlier session and the campaign as a whole. Among the most controversial things Trump had to say during the campaign was that should he win, he would put "crooked," "lying" Hillary in jail. In this same category, he called for a special prosecutor to investigate her for alleged missteps while Secretary of State (Stevenson 2016). This was a promise he made in the debate, and had repeated a number of times and at rallies, as his supporters chanted "Lock her up." Also in the last presidential debate and afterwards he refused to commit to accepting the final election results. He added the country would have to wait to learn his decision until the election had taken place. He did add the proviso he would accept the vote count if he won (Rappeport and Burns 2016). This was widely condemned as behavior more befitting for a third-world dictatorship than America's advanced democratic state. Though as before, it did not appear to drive away voters committed to his candidacy.

The reality however was those Trump spoke to and for proved willing to overlook his personal frailties as well as his serial involvement in controversies in exchange for having someone on the national stage who gave voice to their interests. The consequence was that whatever immediate problem came up, while it led to criticisms and occasional defections by other Republicans running for office, and while Trump and his campaign were attacked by

prominent mainstream Republicans and by the media among others, these had little impact on his core supporters. The election would remain close to the very end.

Trump of course did win the election so any potential constitutional crisis over a candidate's refusing to accept the results of the race was avoided. Also, after the election in speaking to the editorial board of the *New York Times*, he relented on the threat to jail Clinton. "I don't want to hurt the Clintons, I really don't. She went through a lot and suffered greatly in many different ways." He also added: "The campaign was vicious." Many would agree (Davis and Shear 2016).

The range of issues in the three debates touched on (if not developed in any depth) was extensive. These were Syria, terrorism, Russia (and Trump's relationship with Putin), immigration, job creation, Trump's tax and business history, Trump's sexual advances to women, Clinton's emails, nuclear weapons, a "rigged election," abortion, guns, energy, "birtherism" (a movement Trump had informally led for five years that questioned if Barack Obama had been born in the United States), cyberterrorism, Muslim prejudice, the operations of the Clinton and Trump foundations, Clinton's speeches to Wall Street and the pay she received, Trump's Twitters, Clinton's "basket of deplorables," remarks she made in referring to Trump supporters (she said she was trying to show empathy) and, not to be ignored, the Affordable Care Act and its replacement. It was in truth a broad spectrum and stood to illustrate a certain lack of focus, a problem for both campaigns and one dictated by the type of exchanges that dominated the contest. The inability to identify a handful of core concerns and develop these in depth and the reliance by both Clinton and Trump throughout the campaign and their media buys on "character," a distraction from what voters were most concerned about (jobs and terrorism) made for a campaign that while it covered much ground lacked a clear focus on the issues that voters

wanted discussed. One major issue that stood out to many, particularly Millennials, for its absence from the debate was any mention of climate change.

Seemingly what was left was to complete the state-level campaigning and move on to Election Day. Such a prosaic ending to the campaign was not to be. On October 28, twelve days before the vote, came another unpredictable development. It was one that both sides would come to feel influenced the final vote, benefitting Trump and Republicans at all levels of races and hurting Clinton, Democratic congressional candidates and those running for state offices. The Clinton campaign, feeling good about their projections, had begun to campaign more forcefully in solid Republican states and to concentrate more attention on Senate and House candidates.

This all came to an abrupt halt. The campaign was forced to return to the basic swing states it believed it had largely won, drop their more aggressive campaigning in Republican areas, and do their best to counter the new revelations. Trump and Republicans returned to an issue that had plagued her campaign throughout the election and one that had shown itself to be her biggest political liability.

In a letter to Congress dated October 28 the FBI said it had come across a new batch of Clinton emails that had been found on the computer belonging to Anthony Weiner, the estranged husband of a top Clinton aide. To add to the drama, if needed, Weiner was a former New York congressman forced to resign after admitting he had sent sexually explicit photos of himself to various women on the social media site Twitter, behavior he had repeated until it was revealed publicly in late August 2016. The FBI director said in its October letter the newly found emails could be pertinent to their investigation of Clinton's email issues. He also wrote in the letter that the agency could not assess whether the material would be significant and he could not say how long the review would take. It involved just under 650,000 communications. This was 12 days

before the vote. On the Sunday just two days before the election, the FBI released another letter

saying nothing incriminating involving Clinton had been found and the FBI had not changed its

earlier conclusion (Comey 2016a and 2016b).

Clinton was furious. She demanded to see what the FBI director was talking about and

that "the FBI release all the information that it has" and that it do so immediately. She went on to

say that: "It's pretty strange to put something like that out with such little information right

before an election" … In fact, it's not just strange; it's unprecedented and it is deeply troubling."

It was an odd development, the FBI publicly reopening an investigation previously

terminated and doing it in a close election and immediately prior to Election Day. It also went

against FBI policy to avoid involvement in elections. Additionally, the FBI director had been

advised by the Attorney General and others in the Justice Department not to release the letter at

that stage of the campaign. Nonetheless, Comey's announcement changed the dynamic of the

campaign. Trump and Republicans at all levels hit on the development to attack Clinton. She and

her advisors were forced to revamp their campaign strategy. The revised strategy was to focus on

efforts to hold states earlier believed to be in the Clinton column (among these, Michigan,

Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and, in a tight race, Ohio, as well as several southern Border States).

Most critically in the election, she was to lose Rust Belt Midwestern industrial states by

exceptionally narrow margins. These were to determine the outcome of a very close contest.

Clinton believed it was an effort to undermine her campaign. Post-election she, along

with others, would claim that the extraordinary action by the FBI immediately prior to the vote

determined the election's outcome. She may have been right, given the sensation caused by the

announcement; its lack of substance; its immediate incorporation into the election debate; its

potential to hurt one side and help the other; and the number of late-deciders in what was seen as

a close race. There was nothing to rival such an incident in earlier campaigns. Whatever the

motive or naïveté or impolitic nature of the FBI in announcing a new facet of a revived

investigation, there was nothing that could be done about it or to the FBI or to counter the

political impact of the action.

An ABC/*Washington Post* poll released November 1st in the wake of the FBI release

showed essentially a tie between the Clinton and Trump, 46 percent to 45 percent, adding to the

tension and the controversy over what affected the final vote (Langer 2016; Healy and Martin

2016; Apuzzo, Goldman, Schmidt and Rashbaum 2016; and Goldman, Rappeport, Schmidt and

Apuzzo 2016).

Conclusion: A Red Nation?

The electoral map (Figure 1.1) made it appear Donald Trump had won a landslide. In the

Electoral College there was some support for this interpretation. The Electoral College

breakdown was 306 (56.9%) for Trump as against 232 (43.1%) for Hillary Clinton, an

unexpectedly large margin for a candidate not projected to win the race.[1] Trump carried 31

states, Clinton 19 and the District of Columbia. Clinton however won the popular vote by 48.2

percent to Trump's 46.1 percent, a difference of almost 3 million votes, winning more votes than

any losing presidential candidate in U.S. history (*New York Times*, December 20, 2016). Her

vote margin was the third largest for any losing U.S. presidential candidate, topped only by the

elections of 1824 and 1876. Clinton had won California alone, her best showing, by more than 3

million votes (61.5% to Trump's 32.9%) (Krieg 2016 and Porter 2016).

As indicated, the Electoral College is a product of another age and its thinking as to

strategies of representation. It was a constitutional experiment designed at a time where there

were no models in other countries to follow by Founders suspicious of a direct vote and the potential for mob rule. It has continued to have its problems over the years.

There has been a sense of bewilderment as to why it has lasted so long and there have been calls for a direct popular vote in line with other democratic nations. Changing or replacing the Electoral College however would be extremely difficult. This would involve either a constitutional convention called for such a purpose (used only once, in the adoption of the 21st Amendment on Prohibition) plus passage by ¾ of the states or passage of a constitutional amendment by a 2/3 vote of both houses of the Congress and by ¾ of the states. Given the advantage by the less populous states enjoy, change is not likely.

In relation to the group vote, the differences in the candidate coalitions comes across clearly (Table 1.1). Trump did best among men, white (70 % of the electorate), older voters and the less educated. Clinton did well among women, blacks and Latinos (although the turnout of these groups was lower than expected), the young and both college-educated and non-college nonwhite voters. As for issues, the economy was far and away the most important of voter concerns. Terrorism and immigration, both Trump strong points, came in as far less significant.

Table 1.1
Demographics of the 2016 Presidential Vote

	Voter Breakdown	Clinton	Trump
Sex			
Men	48%	41%	53%
Women	52%	54	42
Race			
White	70	37	58
Black	12	88	8
Hispanic	11	65	29
Asian	4	65	29
Other	3	57	37
Age			
18-29	19	54	37
30-44	25	50	42
45-64	40	44	53
65+	16	45	52
Household Income			
<$50,000/year	36	52	41
$50,000+/year	64	47	49
Education by Race			
White/College Grad	37	45	49
White/Non-College	34	28	67
Nonwhite/College Grad	13	71	23
Nonwhite/Non-College	16	75	20
Most Important Issue			
Economy	52	52	42
Foreign policy	13	60	34
Immigration	13	33	64
Terrorism	18	39	57

Source: "How You Voted in the 2016 Election." *Boston Globe.* November 9, 2016. P. A18.

The congressional results, once expected to show significant gains for the Democrats, resulted in continued Republican majorities in both houses of the Congress (Table 1.2). This gave the Republicans control of all three branches of government.

The results:

Table 1.2
Congressional Vote 2016

| | House | | | Senate | |
	Democrats	Republicans		Democrats	Republicans
2017:	194	241		48 *	52
2016:	186	246 (3 seats vacant)		46 *	54

*Includes 2 Independents who caucus with the Democrats.

Source: Data from Ballotpedia, https://ballotpedia.org/United_States_Congress_elections,_2016.

The Democrats did gain 2 seats in the Senate and increased their House representation by 6 seats. The Republicans maintained a solid majority in both houses of the Congress. In one indication of both how polarized the parties have become and how gerrymandered the congressional districts are, only 21 states had at least one battleground race in either the House or Senate. The rest were largely uncompetitive.

On the state level, gubernatorial elections were also held in 12 states. The Republican party gained two governorships and increased the total number of Republican governors to 33, the highest number seen since 1922. The Democrats lost two governorships, resulting in a total of 16 states. (One state, Alaska, had an independent governor who had won office in 2014.)

As for state legislative elections, beginning in the post-World War II years and continuing through to the 2008 election, the political party of an outgoing, two-term president, or

consecutive one-party presidencies, lost an average of 450 state legislative seats. During Barack

Obama's years in office the total doubled to a net party loss of 958 seats (Ballotpedia 2016).

Obama, the putative leader of the party, had little interest in intra-party affairs, leading to the

results indicated.

This level of losses should have indicated to national party leaders the neglect of the

party at the local level. It also should have told Democratic party strategists that the party's

message, essentially a cultural, identity-based emphasis during the Obama presidency and as

reflected in Hillary Clinton's choice of a campaign slogan "Stronger Together" (replacing the

earlier slogan emphasizing the economy) had little appeal to grassroots voters and especially

those concerned with economic conditions. Such historic losses in state legislative races should

have provided warning signs that a return to more traditional party concerns directed to working

and middle class voters and dealing with jobs and economic conditions needed emphasis in the

2016 presidential campaign. Considerably more Republican seats were at risk and the Democrats

should have done well, as they were expected to do. They did not. It was the Republican party

that continued its mastery of state legislative races (Table 1.3).

The results:

Table 1.3
Party Control of State Legislatures

Legislative Chamber	2016		2017	
	Democratic	Republican	Democratic	Republican
State Senates	14	36	13	37
State Houses	16	33	18	31
Total	30	69	31	68

Source: Data from Ballotpedia, https://ballotpedia.org/State_legislative_elections,_2016.

One further note: As of 2017, the Republican party controlled the governorships and both houses of the state legislature in 25 states to 6 states for the Democrats. The significance is to add importance to the 2018 and 2020 state races in preparation for the congressional redistricting to come after the decennial Census. Congressional district lines as presently drawn are gerrymandered to substantially benefit the Republican party, leading to popular vote majorities nationwide for Democrats and congressional party dominance for Republicans. The battle over the drawing of district lines will resume after the 2020 races.

Discussion: The conditions that gave rise to a Trump victory in actuality had been long in the making. These could be found in the restructuring of the nation's economic system, in line with neoliberal assumptions, that began in earnest during the Reagan years and carried through later presidencies, most notably those of George W. Bush and Bill Clinton (the ideology proved to be bipartisan). A second major contributor was the racial realignment of working class white voters after the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The realignment began in the South and later spread to the rest of the country. It was spearheaded by Alabama George C. Wallace and coopted by President Richard M. Nixon who repackaged Wallace's extremist message into more acceptable mainstream appeals. In addition, the increasing lack of relevance of the nation's political parties, their inability to adapt to the changing tides of history or to stay in touch with their constituent base and adequately represent its interests contributed to what was to come in 2016 and potentially thereafter.

The consequences could be predicted. In fact, a now-deceased philosopher of pragmatism, in 1998 did that in a strikingly relevant projection of events to come. Richard Rorty wrote:

[m]embers of labor unions, and unorganized unskilled workers, will sooner or later realize that their government is not even trying to prevent wages from sinking or to prevent jobs from being exported. Around the same time, they will realize that suburban white-collar workers – themselves desperately afraid of being downsized – are not going to let themselves be taxed to provide social benefits for anyone else.

At that point, something will crack. The non-suburban electorate will decide that the system has failed and start looking around for a strongman to vote for – someone willing to assure them that, once he is elected, the smug bureaucrats, tricky lawyers, overpaid bond salesmen, and postmodernist professors will no longer be calling the shots. …

One thing that is very likely to happen is that the gains made in the past 40 years by black and brown Americans, and by homosexuals, will be wiped out. Jocular contempt for women will come back into fashion. … All the resentment which badly educated Americans feel about having their manners dictated to them by college graduates will find an outlet (qtd. in Senior 2016)

A harsh assessment of contemporary American politics perhaps, but one that would find echoes in the 2016 election. Ross Douthat, a conservative/centrist columnist for the *New York Times*, writing shortly before the vote projected as to what a Trump of Clinton presidency might look like. He characterized the broad outlines of the election race, as seen from the perspective of the Clinton campaign, as a choice of extremes:

A vote for Hillary Clinton over Donald Trump, the Clinton campaign has suggested in broad ways and subtle tones, isn't just a vote for a Democrat over a Republican: It's a vote for safety over risk, steady competence over boastful recklessness, psychological stability in the White House over ungovernable passions.

In regards to each of the campaigns, should Trump win:

The perils of a Trump presidency are as distinctive as the candidate himself, and a vote for Trump makes a long list of worst cases – the Western alliance system's unraveling, a cycle of domestic radicalization, an accidental economic meltdown, a civilian-military crisis – more likely than with any normal administration.

> Indeed, Trump and his supporters almost admit as much. 'We've tried sane, now let's try crazy,' is basically his campaign's working motto. The promise to be a bull in a china shop is part of his demagogue's appeal. Some of his more eloquent supporters have analogized a vote for Trump to storming the cockpit of a hijacked place, with the likelihood of a plane crash entirely factored in.

And for a Clinton victory, the outlook was bleak also:

> The dangers of a Hillary Clinton presidency are more familiar than Trump's authoritarian unknowns, because we live with them in our politics already. They're the dangers of elite groupthink, of Beltway power worship, of a cult of presidential action in the service of dubious ideals. They're the dangers of a recklessness and radicalism that doesn't recognize itself as either, because it's convinced that if an idea is mainstream and commonplace among the great and good then it cannot possibly be folly.

> Almost every crisis that has come upon the West in the last 15 years has its roots in this establishmentarian type of folly (Douthat 2016).

In this account, Clinton, then projected to win the election, represented the continuation of a politics, unaware of its faults and failures, condemning the nation to more of the same. Whether Douthat captured the essence of the concerns with a projected Clinton presidency as felt by Trump supporters can only be speculated on. Still, the Washington consensus, group-think mentality and the status-quo continuation of economic imbalances, military misadventures and terrorist threats and corresponding rise of a national security state may well have provided the foundations of the essential distrust encountered by the Clinton candidacy and the appeal of a Donald Trump and his message of change.

One of the oddities of an election full of them was the failure of the Clinton campaign to focus on the economy. It had improved under the Obama administration, although not to the extent some would like and not reaching all levels of the society. Limited evidence of an upturn

was enough to get Obama reelected in 2012. After that election, the economic upswing gained momentum. A total of 15.6 million private sector jobs had been added since 2010 and the unemployment rate had been reduced to 4.9 percent by Election Day. Consumer confidence had approached its highest level in a decade. Economic improvements had begun appearing nationwide and while not dramatic (or for that matter, not evenly distributed in the society) should have given the Democrats a cutting issue entering the campaign (Sachs 2016).

Most presidential elections are tied to the state of the economy. In 2016 it was seen by most voters as strong. A Clinton focus on this growth, a promise to continue it and a pledge to bring it home to the largely rural white sectors of the country that constituted Trump's base of support, would have had a strong appeal. It was an appeal with a proven track record of success.

Clinton as a senator had concentrated on stimulating economic development in white, rural areas of upstate New York, badly in need of it. She had experienced a degree of success and did well in these areas (and the rest of New York) winning reelection with two-thirds of the vote. Clinton also did have a series of economic proposals buried in her platform, ones she had difficulty in summarizing and presenting in the abbreviated form necessitated by campaign rallies and debates. Trump in turn had a brief and effective message to the effect his supporters were left out of any recovery and that he, and only be, could and would change this.

When questioned in the debates as to jobs and her economic policy, Clinton continually repeated she would put her husband, Bill Clinton, in charge of the economy. It is difficult to know if she was serious but it did send a mixed message to viewers. It appeared, and for no understandable reason, that a candidate conversant with the need for targeted economic development and with a record of attention to the problem in less well-off areas while in the Senate, preferred not to deal with it in the campaign. As for entrusting Bill Clinton with the

responsibility for the economy, his administration did experience a spike in employment before he left office that approached full employment. It was mostly in low-wage jobs at McDonald's, Starbucks and the like and did not last. At another level, Clinton's actions as president had helped bring about the economic collapse of 2007-2008. He had embraced Republican deregulation positions and his association with and advancement of the interests of Wall Street and the financial industry did not turn out well. Hillary Clinton's refusal to prioritize jobs, a traditional Democratic message, in turn left Trump free to appeal to voters through vague promises with little substantive content and, equally important, to project a symbolic personal identification with economic out-groups to gain their support.

The election was won and lost here. Exceptionally close wins in the Upper Midwest, normally Democratic and labor union strongholds, gave Trump his edge in the Electoral College. Additionally six states Barack Obama had won would all end in Trump's column (Cohen 2016).

Post-election, local and state party officials in Michigan, Ohio and other struggling Rust Belt areas claimed they had made repeated efforts to send a message to the Clinton campaign that a "one-size-fits-all strategy" was not working with their voters. To appeal to union workers and working-class voters, the campaign needed to address issues of job growth and economic development in detail. Clinton's campaign manager later was to say the fight over campaign tactics in the economically depressed regions of the country never reached his desk.

It may be that a number of conditions contributed to the Clinton loss and the economy (as is usual in a presidential contest) was among the most decisive. The problems experienced in reaching voters in these areas may suggest another explanation for the outcome.

> … Clinton's loss could be attributed to any number of factors – FBI Director … Comey's letter shifting late deciders, the lack of a compelling economic message, the apparent Russian hacking. But heartbroken and frustrated in-state battleground

operatives worry that a lesson being missed is a simple one: Get the basics of campaigning right (Dovere 2016).

It was an angry and unrelentingly contentious campaign .As indicated earlier, both candidates were unpopular and distrusted by large segments of the population (Sachs 2016 and Martin, Sussman and Thee-Brenan 2016). Given this, and the entirely unexpected victory of a political novice with a questionable business and personal background and a disregard for restraint or civility, the anger of his opponents at the results should have been predictable. These critiques ranged in intensity and alarm depending on how each individual viewed the result. David Remnick presents his take on the outcome. It is unforgiving, and in his eyes "a tragedy for the American republic."

> There are, inevitably, miseries to come: an increasingly reactionary Supreme Court; an emboldened right-wing Congress; a President whose disdain for women and minorities, civil liberties and scientific fact, to say nothing of simple decency, has been repeatedly demonstrated. Trump is vulgarity unbounded, a knowledge-free national leader who will not only set markets tumbling but will strike fear into the hearts of the vulnerable, the weak, and, above all, the many varieties of Other whom he has so deeply insulted. The African-American Other. The Hispanic Other. The female Other. The Jewish and Muslim Other. The most hopeful way to look at this grievous event – and it's a stretch – is that this election and the years to follow will be a test of the strength, or the fragility, of American institutions. It will be a test of our seriousness and resolve (Remnick 2016).

Trump's early appointments of Wall Street insiders to the top economic posts and military generals to positions in national security and defense did little to calm those who questioned his commitments and/or feared his presidency.

Whatever the nature of the presidency to come, Hillary Clinton's concession speech offers a contrast to what had gone before. It did include veiled references to points raised in the campaign exchanges but in overall terms took a positive approach. While acknowledging that "the loss hurts," she went on to say "…please never stop believing that fighting for what's right

is worth it." As for her opponent, she indicated her hope that Trump would be "a successful president for all Americans" and would defend "the rule of law; the principle we are all equal in rights and dignity; freedom of worship and expression." As she said: "We owe him an open mind and a chance to lead. Our constitutional democracy enshrines the peaceful transfer of power. And we don't just respect that. We cherish it." (Clinton 2016).

It may be best to remember that the nation has survived crises that provided severe threats to its unity, its equality and its ability to preserve the values that made it great. American government has proven flexible and adaptive to change. The likelihood is that however mild or extreme the challenge to come, it should continue to do so.

Postscript: The Recount: American elections are normally well run, although of course errors can occur. Historically fraud at the individual voter level has been infinitesimal. Any change in the vote count sufficient to overturn the final results in a recount was not to be expected.

Why then seek a recount? Clinton had been presented with evidence from election experts that her vote totals in counties using electronic voting machines was 7 percent lower than those using hand-counted paper ballots and optical scan voting systems, both considered more precise and reliable. The figures would provide a grounds for the recount in the targeted states.

There was another issue. The Russians had been accused during the campaign of hacking the Democratic National Committee email and then releasing the findings through WikiLeaks to the public in an effort to advance a Trump presidency (Trump had stated his admiration for Vladimir Putin, the Russian president, repeatedly during the campaign.) It turned out the accusations as to Russian hacking had merit but there was nothing to indicate they had done so in the states chosen for a recount (Lipton, Sanger and Shane 2016).

The Clinton camp decided not to seek a recount (although they later associated themselves with the effort). Dr. Jill Stein, the Green Party's presidential candidate, decided at that point she would file for recounts in three industrial states with strong union movements that went for Trump. The three states in question, Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania, were chosen since they were critical in determining the election's outcome. Trump's margin of victory in each was minuscule (less than 1%). Trump had won Wisconsin by 27,257 votes (0.7%); Michigan by 10,704 (0.2%); and Pennsylvania by 49,543 (0.8%). Should the vote results after a recount have favored Clinton in each, she would have gained 46 electoral votes, changing Trump's total from 306 to 260 and hers from 232 to 278. This would have been enough to meet and exceed the 270 needed for victory.

States and localities do not want to engage in recounts and do everything they legally can to avoid them. They are expensive and time-consuming and normally amount to little. There is an additional problem in terms of time constraints; the states' electoral vote count was due by December 19th, a difficult deadline to meet should a recount take place. Consequently the states establish a series of arcane standards and financial requirements that need to be met to engage in such a challenge. Also the courts are historically unfriendly to recounts as well.

Challenges by Trump and by the state Republican parties led to court actions that effectively killed the recount efforts in Pennsylvania and Michigan. Wisconsin was the only state to complete the process and it only slightly changed the final vote count, although not the results.

This then finally ended a long, angry and, for many, dispiriting campaign.

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Notes

1. In the December 19, 2016 official vote of the Electoral College, there were 7 defectors

   (or "faithless electors"), who declined to vote for their party's nominee. Trump received

   304 electoral votes to Hillary Clinton's 227, still surpassing the 270 needed for Trump to

   be the election victor.

Source: W. Crotty, "Not An Ordinary Election: The Presidential Race of 2016," in W. Crotty,

ed., *Winning the Presidency 2016* (New York: Routledge, 2018).