

DEBATING TRUMP PHENOMENON

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DONALD TRUMP: MORBID SYMPTOM OF THE INTERREGNUM TRUMP AS TROPE

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Abstract. The election of Donald Trump raises a number of questions about how and why he was supported by the voters to gain electoral college victory. His election was not due to economic hardships but rather due to his unique ability to mobilize three primary constituents of the republican party: its billionaire elites, evangelical Christians and racist white nationalists. His appeal rested upon the

ДОНАЛД ТРАМП: БОЛЕЗНЕННЫЙ СИМПТОМ «МЕЖДУЦАРСТВИЯ» ТРАМПА КАК МЕТАФОРА

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Аннотация. Ряд вопросов возникает при анализе избрания Дональда Трампа Президентом США, в первую очередь, как и почему Трамп нашел электоральную поддержку и добился победы в Коллегии выборщиков. Его избрание было связано не столько с экономическими проблемами, сколько с его уникальной способностью мобилизовать три базовых элемента Республиканской партии:

authoritarianism of these constituencies, as well as fears of the loss of privileged identities based on race, religion and/or gender, disdain toward immigrants, fearing the “decline” of the nation and resentment toward corrupt elites.

элиту среди миллиардеров, христиан-евангелистов и белых националистов расистского толка. Обращаясь к ним, он делал упор на авторитарный характер мышления этих групп, боязь потери привилегированного положения из-за расы, религии и/или пола, презрение к мигрантам, страх перед «закатом» нации, а также чувство враждебности к коррумпированной элите.

Keywords: Interregnum, legitimation crises, authoritarianism, reactionary populisms, racism, racial extinction, resentment, privileged identities

Ключевые слова: «междоцарствие», кризис легитимации, авторитаризм, реакционный популизм, расизм, вымирание расы, рессентимент, идентичности привилегированных групп

«The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear.»

Antonio Gramsci

INTRODUCTION

How do we understand the ascent of Donald Trump as a businessman, then a reality TV personality capitalizing on his supposed «business acumen», and then, without any political experience, with a very limited understanding of politics, and what some consider severely flawed, malignant narcissistic, authoritarian, impulse ridden personality, climbed to the very pinnacle of world power as president of the United States? This is indeed a very complex question that has generated a cottage industry of critiques and analyses based upon one’s discipline, and within an academic discipline, there are again a variety of explanatory perspectives. I would like to offer a perspective informed by the early traditions of the Frankfurt school of critical theory, more recent concerns with the emotional aspects of social movements, and the growing number of empirical studies of the recent election.

The basic premise of my analysis, is that the developed countries of the world, more or less integrated in a deterritorialized, globalized world market, celebrated and regulated by neoliberal ideologies and practices, riven by a number of legitimation crises, has reached a point of exhaustion and is facing decline, transformation and renewal. The current world is dying, unsustainable for number of reasons. At this historical juncture of past and future we can easily see the one of the most blatant signs of the current interregnum its morbid symptom, has been the emergence of a variety of reactionary movements, e. g. authoritarian populisms, ethno — religious nationalisms, and virulent expressions of racism and intolerance that would halt, if not reverse the slow but steady progress toward tolerance, inclusion, equality etc. while these various forms of authoritarian populism can be seen in many parts of the world, it’s most blatant expression has been the recent history of the Republican Party in America, and the symbol, the trope of this transformation was the election of Donald J Trump as POTUS.

Perhaps one might start with growing inequality, three men now have half the wealth of the United States and five men have half the wealth of the world. Meanwhile, we note stagnant wages for the majority with the squeezing, «hollowing out», of the middle classes and the explosion of urban poverty in a «planet of slums» [Davis, 2006], rapidly expanding precariat classes including many of the college educated working in dead-end «gig» jobs [Standing, 2011], debt-financed governments as well as highly indebted individual lifestyles exist as critiques of global capital threatening the very demise of the capitalist system. Perhaps we might move on to the ecological catastrophes in the making from the pollution of air, waters and the land, industrial agriculture/aquaculture, fossil fuel based global warming with ever more devastating droughts, massive forest fires, ever more powerful hurricanes, tornadoes and tsunamis etc. If unprecedented climate change, increased global warming, and ever more polluted land air and water remain unabated, the near future may see the very end of the human species. Moreover, between advanced technologies, artificial intelligence, and digital communication, we witness an unprecedented rate of social change. Finally, given that contemporary geopolitics, we've seen unprecedented numbers of people migrating from growing poverty, ecological hardships, genocidal civil wars and insurrections-while the welcome mats of safer, more affluent countries are being removed. The emancipatory promise of the Enlightenment, that science, logic and Reason would enable human progress, personal/political and economic freedom, democracy and equality, further enabled by modern advanced technological innovations ranging first from steam powered mass production, to today when digitally based artificial intelligence directing robotic production as well as administration-has meant that the dream of the Enlightenment has instead become a nightmare. Save for the small number of wealthy elites living in unprecedented levels of splendor, most observers see that the present system is unsustainable, indeed dying, and a new vision is not yet forthcoming — especially since a sustainable society would require a far more modest standard of living involving far less fossil fuel, the consumption of much less animal protein, ending environmental devastation based on mass consumption that leaves millions of tons of almost indestructible environmental waste.

As Marx suggested, changing economic systems and changing class dynamics foster changes in cultural values as well as psychosocial changes. Thus we see number of rapidly changing aspects of contemporary cultures in which traditional values, identities and lifestyles have been discarded by many people especially younger generations. But many other segments of societies would seek to arrest, if not reverse the social and cultural changes that challenge their established identities values and lifestyles. Otherwise said, the particular world in which we live today is in a period of transition, an interregnum, but at the same time, we do not yet have a vision of an alternative to the present. The promises of neoliberal capitalism, especially the promise that the rising tide would raise all ships have proven empty, much as did the communism early 20th century. What then does the future hold or perhaps we might even ask if there is a future.

For Durkheim this is a period of an anomie, normalness, the time of transition between old and new, when the old values are no longer salience have and the new values not yet been established much as modernity replaced feudalism, dynastic rule

ended, and rational bureaucracies supplanted patrimonial organizations. Similarly, for Gramsci, the interregnum was the period between the dying of one society and birth of another, a time marked by morbid symptoms today, the symbol of this morbidity, has been clearly evident in the explosion of various right-wing political agendas, support for dictators, authoritarian populisms, and reactionary ethno-religious nationalisms that would not simply thwart social change but seek restore a «lost society» that more likely than not exists more as a social imaginary than a historical reality. The mobilizations of various authoritarian reactionary. can be seen as the morbid symptoms of transition-as attempts to stop if not reverse decline and perhaps the most blatant trope of decline has been the support for Donald Trump.

Crises of legitimacy

One of the major factors giving rise to the research and theoretical agendas of the early Frankfurt school was the rise of fascism in Germany precipitated by the economic collapse, the failure of the enfeebled Weimar government to be able to contain the crises of a global depression, and the failure to develop a cohesive value system in face of a society driven by economic political crises. In response to growing unemployment, hyperinflation and economic uncertainty, there was a great deal of fear, anxiety and anger that was often expressed in violent street confrontations between left and right parties and organizations. These conditions led to the ascent of the Nazi party, the election of Hitler as Chancellor, passage of the enabling acts, and establishment of the third Reich¹. Moreover, a crucial aspect enabling the mass embrace of fascism, was the prevalence of authoritarianism among many sectors of the German population including the more affluent segments of the working classes. Authoritarianism, rooted in psychoanalytic theory, was seen as a particular character trait disposed to submission to leaders who promised to return their obedience with his love, while at the same time authoritarians, demanded obedience and compliance from subordinates ranging from employees to wives to children. Moreover, an essential part was «authoritarian aggression», sadomasochistic impulses in which hostility was directed toward outsiders, especially typically weak and marginal Others, outsiders and nonconformists seen as «culprits» blamed for adversities and responsible for Germany's hardships and hence they became targets for aggression. Moreover, long-standing traditions of anti-Semitism based on unscrupulous merchants and parasitic bankers fueled the embrace of fascism. This anger was also directed toward the Communists, and extended to the incompetent political elites of Weimar and ultimately to the French and English «victors in World War I. In face of the various crises, there was widespread fear, anger, and uncertainty that stoked underlying authoritarianism and in turn disposed the submission to Hitler, the «powerful leader,» the combination of King Kong and the corner barber, who represented the ordinary «people» while having the extraordinary power to affect social transformations primarily the restoration of a lost world that would alleviate their suffering. Economic factors do not explain award for Trump is him Trumpism for majority of his supporters. Following the early legacies of critical theory, especially Fromm, Adorno and Horkheimer, looking at the authoritarianism of

¹ It should be noted, that the communist and socialist parties were actually more numerous than the Nazis, but they were unable to work together to defeat the Nazis who gain control of the Reichstag with 34% of the vote.

the lower middle classes, together with support from other classes including segments of the working classes, as well as the economic elites the thought that they could «control» Hitler, after the post 1929 economic crises, the charismatic appeal of Hitler, the inspiring mass spectacles of power and the use of the new mass media enabled the Nazi party to come to power².

For Habermas [Habermas, 1975] this history, itself the context of his youth, informed his notion of «legitimation crises,» as those times when the «steering mechanisms» of the society, dominant social institutions of modern societies, the economy, the polity and the cultural system seem to fail and people lose confidence. The economic system is expected to provide decent standards of living for everyone, the government is expected to enact and sustain the policies that enable the economic system to produce and deliver its goods and services, as well as provide various benefits, secure justice for all etc., and finally the cultural system is expected to provide meaning, solidarity and social integration. Given what is been said before, it is evident that contemporary societies face a number of legitimation crises. But what is essential for Habermas, is that crises at the level of the system migrate into the «life world», the realm of experience, identity and emotions. As will be seen, crises at the level of system, are often experienced as various moral or emotional shocks, and when the typifications and routines of everyday life including the bases of self-esteem and recognition are challenged, we generally see very strong emotional reactions such as anger, fear, anxiety, often shame and humiliation, depression etc.

A great deal has been said about Trump to which I can add little that has not already been said. What needs further explanation, is how and why he could mobilize so many to join his cultlike base will maintain their devotion and loyalty notwithstanding his unscrupulous business practices, his sexual promiscuity and payments of hush money to models and porn stars, the convictions of many of his associates, etc. etc. but he was able to capitalize upon their anxiety over problematic privileged now endangered status, fear of collective demise, anger at various «enemies» and intense *ressentiment* for the self-serving elites in different to the interests of the «people». How did this happen? As suggested before, the starting place is the consideration of crises of legitimacy and the impacts upon identities as well as the various emotions aroused.

It was not the economy stupid!

Perhaps the first lesson taught in a statistics class is that correlation is not causality, more specifically, following the election of Donald Trump, enabled by electoral college after his very slim victories in states like Ohio, Pennsylvania and Michigan, various pundits and talking heads proclaimed that the adverse economic consequences of globalization, especially shuttered factories, declining towns and unemployment in the industrial states mobilized a discontented, economically frustrated working-class population to vote for Donald Trump. But in the weeks months and following year or so, careful analysis of the election results showed this was not the case at all and in fact

² This is not to suggest that Trump is a Hitler who had a strong party backing, support from many sectors of big capital (ThyssenKrupp, Siemens) a clear cut cohesive if disgusting ideology and talented administrative staff-important for all charismatic leaders. Donald Trump on the other hand as a series of episodic outbursts expressed in tweets rather than an ideology, a less than stellar staff, most of whom do not stay in office very long, and increasingly, many economic elites such as the Koch brothers, have withdrawn their support for Trump.

the economically distressed members of the white working classes voted for Hillary. Indeed the average Trump voter at family income of \$ 72,000 a year, about 50 % higher than the average American,. Moreover Trump carried the majority of white male voters making over \$ 100,000 a year. Thus the attempt to explain the election on the basis of economic hardship may have made good journalism. The day after the election, but was ultimately not well sustained by the careful analyses of the vote. What then led people to vote for Trump?

As been remarkably clear that the majority of Trump voters have been likely to be white people indeed he carried every white voting group except for college-educated women and he still got approximately 48 % of them. On the one hand this is not particularly surprising since it's been particularly clear, especially after 1964 when the Democrats passed the civil rights bill which led to a massive exodus of white people from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party, especially in the South. In 1968, with Nixon's «Southern Strategy,» not so subtly appealing to white racism, the Republican Party has primarily supported various shades of racism ranging from white Southerners celebrating the Confederacy a. k. a. white privilege to Northern working-class whites fearing the losses of their white privileges. While most Republican candidates have cloaked the racist appeals in more neutral terms such as «state's rights,» or abolishing «welfare queens,» or the more pejorative notion of «takers» rather than makers, for reasons to be noted, more overtly so than other Republican candidates, Trump was very open and upfront about his racism, xenophobia, and disdain for Moslems³.

PART I: WHY TRUMP

The central argument of this essay, is that save for a small number of rich elites who stood to profit from Trump selection, economic factors as such had little role in the wider support for Trump. The journalistic explanations that globalization, financialization, economic stagnation etc. led the working classes to support Trump was not substantiated by empirical research indeed, those segments of the working classes that did feel economically distressed, were more likely to support Clinton. What factors might then explain the support for Trump? For many of his voters, the support was not simply preferences for certain policies regarding regulations, tariffs taxation or investments as such, **but intense, emotionally driven passions such as fear of change, disdain of racial, ethnic or cultural minorities, and anxieties in face of the challenges to heretofore privileged white identities.** When that privilege is typically invisible and becomes challenged, such challenges to ones very self are generally marked by intense emotional reactions. Otherwise said, Trump's support was driven more by emotions social psychological factors than economic factors. What were these factors? As will be suggested, racism, authoritarianism, and *ressentiment* may be analytically distinguished, but in practice markedly overlap. These long-standing aspects of American society, erupted in the 2016 election to embrace Trump's reactionary populism, ironically enough, a populism seemingly directed toward other elites, the «swamp,» seen as illegitimate pretenders to leadership who indeed betrayed the

³ His father, using government finance programs, built a number of apartments but subsequently faced a number of discrimination charges. As the young Donald began his real estate career, much of his work was telling minorities, especially African-Americans, there were no vacancies.

interests of the «people» by supporting tolerance, inclusion, and «political correctness» that together with changing demographics, threatened the demise of white racial privilege if not the ending of the «legitimate» domination of a «superior» race. Indeed this fear of decline has a long history, as NYT columnist Charles Blow put it, citing a good deal of social science/demographic evidence, «white extinction anxiety, white displacement anxiety, white minority anxiety... is the fear and anxiety Trump is playing to. *Politico Magazine* dubbed Trump «Pat Buchanan With Better Timing.»⁴ Similarly, as Chauncy de Vega, noting Achen and Bartels put it:

Donald Trump has *not* dramatically remade the Republican Party, nor has he caused a mass exodus by its more «sensible» voters. Trump is in fact the leader of the Republican Party; his values, policies and ideas are shared by a large majority of Republican voters. Because Republicans and the broader right-wing have spent at least five decades nurturing both dog whistle white identity politics and overt racism, as well as other culture war issues, their voters are a movement beholden to a type of political religion⁵.

As a quasi-religion, providing a meaningful, privileged collective identity for a particular community that is closely intertwined with worldviews of social or moral superiority in which are sustained by a variety of emotional gratifications, challenges and contestations to the core of one's self, one's identities elicits intense anger fear and quite often, disposes reactionary social mobilizations to defend challenged identities.

Racism: With the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 many of the heretofore racist elements of the Democratic Party, including segments of the Dixiecrats, quickly abandoned the Democratic Party to the Republican Party. The contemporary Republican Party, once the party of abolition and emancipation, was markedly transformed by the massive influx of racist bigots. As this took place, the Republican intellectuals, having read Gramsci, understood the necessity of waging a «war of position» to ultimately gain political power and part and parcel of that agenda, was to incorporate heretofore apolitical religious conservatives as well as racist elements, often overlapping groups, into the party and this would be evident in the 1968 election. Fast forward to 2008. For many such groups, the election of Barack Obama, the first African-American president, was experienced as a «moral shock» in so far as many thought of America as a «white Christian country.» This was first evident with the birth of the Tea Party shortly after the election. While they claimed to oppose government spending, especially on social programs dependent on taxation, TEA standing for «taxed enough already» their early rallies publicly proclaimed their intense racism and the disdain for Obama notwithstanding that his actual neoliberal/imperialist policies were little different from those of Bill Clinton. Within a short time, given financial and organizational support from various conservative/libertarian organizations, the Tea Party soon learned to mute and disguise their racism. Thus for example, their disdain for government provided health care insurance, was less based on any kind of cost-benefit analysis, but the feeling that such benefits, would go to lazy, undeserving minorities who did not deserve largess

⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/24/opinion/america-white-extinction.html> (accessed September 8, 2018).

⁵ DeVega, C. Pain Is the Reward: Here's What Pundits Keep Getting Wrong about Trump and His Supporters. <https://www.salon.com/2018/04/13/pain-is-the-reward-heres-what-pundits-keep-getting-wrong-about-trump-and-his-supporters/> (accessed September 7, 2018).

from the government. Many Tea Party members were quite perplexed when reporters informed them that their Medicare and Social Security payments were provided by the government but of course they claimed entitlement to these entitlements

Trump's political career began with his avid support of «birtherism,» an elaborate conspiracy theory, a hoax in which claimed that Obama was born in Kenya rather than Hawaii and was thus disqualified from running for president. Trump gained a sizable audience and following from his relentless pursuit of Obama as a Kenyan, Muslim, terrorist, communist, fascist, as well as an elitist who preferred arugula to head lettuce. And if that wasn't enough, there were suggestions that he was not qualified to get into Harvard, and even less qualified to become the editor of the *Harvard Law Review*. And finally, he had been a community organizer before becoming a law school professor. Thus he was seen as not only a «foreigner,» an outsider, but a leftist radical and intellectual a combination especially disdained by authoritarians (see below). Notwithstanding the display of his birth certificate as well as birth announcements in Hawaii in newspapers, Trump and his followers persisted in supporting that hoax for about five years-it created what would become his base

Authoritarianism: As was noted, one of the lesson contributions of the Frankfurt School to political psychology, was the salience of authoritarianism as influencing political values and behaviors. One of the central aspects of this authoritarianism was intolerance toward others, especially racial, ethnic and/or religious minorities. One of the most important indicators of this prejudice was the extent to which Hitler, building upon long-standing traditions of anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria, was able to parlay this intolerance into an «explanation» of how and why Germany had been «stabbed in the back» by traders from within and kept impoverished by unscrupulous bankers and — in both cases, the Jews were blamed for German adversities. Besides the Jews, the Communists, and indeed Slavs in general were deemed enemies and in so far as many Jews had been communists, socialists, and/or labor leaders, they were readily cast as the scapegoats for German adversities. Racism in America has served number of important, not the least of which was to provide cheap labor whether as agricultural or artisanal slaves, sharecroppers or menial workers. Further, racism, which provided poor whites with seemingly higher status and certain privileges, served to divide poor black and white populations into warring factions that would prevent their joining together in common struggle against the elites who profited from the subordinate status of both groups. Further, racism has allowed various politicians to blame their own «failed policies» on racialized Others and not only deflect responsibility for failure, but mobilize support for themselves by castigating others. In ways reminiscent of what was called the «mass psychology of fascism» [Reich, 1980] authoritarianism was more predictive of support for Trump than income or education. A great deal of evidence has shown the Trump's appeal was clearly to his blatant support for racism, xenophobia, homophobia, Islamophobia, that together with his clear embrace of intense hostility toward «enemies» and justifiable exclusion or torture of these «enemies» clearly appealed to the authoritarianism of his followers.

Smith and Hanley [Smith, Hanley, 2018] were able to include a few questions tied to authoritarianism into the American National Election Study. Authoritarianism turned out to be highly correlated with aspects of intolerance such as racial, ethnic and/or

religious prejudices or homophobia. In their analysis of the 2016 election returns, authoritarianism was highly correlated with support for Trump whose supporters voted for him **mainly because they shared his prejudices, not because they're financially stressed**. It's true, as exit polls showed, that voters without four-year college degrees were likelier than average to support Trump..[their] authoritarianism and their prejudices. Indeed, Trump supporters were less likely to be the economically distressed white working classes portrayed in the media. The fundamental point here is that while people may assume a variety of identities, occupational, political, religious or aspects of lifestyle and/or cultural preferences, any particular identity formation may be associated with various levels of authoritarianism. Thus a churchgoer may very well be an evangelical Christian or perhaps a Unitarian-but denominational preference, e. g. religious identity, very between strongly authoritarian or many cases antiauthoritarian.

It should be noted to other qualities tend to be associated with authoritarianism include conformity, anti-intellectualism and the devotion to «strong» leaders. Authoritarians generally prefer action to thought, and more often than not, their thoughts tends to disdain ideas, ambiguity or critique instead, authoritarianism is highly associated with either/or black white /thinking dogmatism and in turn tends to be impervious to change. Much like the embrace of Hitler, Trump, seemingly the successful and powerful businessman, was seen as a strong leader, a powerful hero with «extraordinary» skills who would do battle against the corrupt and illegitimate elites and thwart various interlopers and «enemies» but whose levels of discourse, expressions of violence, plebeian tastes in food and culture, and disdain of «political correctness» made him appear as one of the «ordinary people,» the «working class» billionaire.

Privileged Identities: While to be sure, racism has long served economic functions first justifying slavery, then lower wages for minorities who at the same time typically face higher costs of living. The salient issue for today is less economic as such but rather psychosocial privilege-the advantage that a particular identity, in this case whiteness, bestows upon the person. Freud claimed that people wanted to be happy by realizing the «pleasure principle» ultimately based on the gratification of otherwise repressed and/or unconscious desires. For sociological purposes however, people generally wish to feel good about themselves and who they are, this may be called positive self-regard or self-esteem, positive recognition from others, a sense of dignity etc. Thus one of the more salient aspects of the support for racism, sexism, xenophobia etc. has been the preservation of heretofore status providing, privileged identities. One of the primary problems of having a privileged identity, is that its «benefits» are often quite invisible. As many scholars have reported, most of the white working classes, are oblivious to the various benefits their whiteness has bestowed whether access to education, union membership that often translates into employment, renting or buying housing and myriad other ways etc. Most workers today «feel they are struggling to get by and such struggles limit the capacity for empathy for minorities that have a much tougher time. Indeed, many actually believe that racial and ethnic minorities gain support from the government as a result of the policies of «corrupt» elites. Thus one piece of folklore spread by right-wing can conspiracy theorists had it that when undocumented workers crossed the Rio Grande, they were met by Obama's immigration

authorities, given green cards, cash, access to Medicare and jobs if they promised to vote for Democrats. And indeed, many Trump supporters believe this, much as strongly as they had believed Obama was a Kenyan, Moslem extremist⁶.

Thus it now becomes clear, that while many of the major factors leading to the embrace of Trumpism where the impacts of globalization and modernization, **it was not so much the economic consequences of neoliberalism and/or global markets, but the extent to which globalization has fostered a great deal of migration and immigration that has resulted in demographic change**⁷. Today, immigrant populations are less likely to move into the older « ethnic enclaves» of large, cities, but are much more spread out in the suburbs, exurbs, and even rural towns where as «outsiders» they are easily noted. Moreover, at the same time, minorities are more likely to be visible in mass media.. The primary consequence of migration based demographic change, coupled with grater birthrates among various minorities, indigenous or immigrant, has led to the greater visibility of various foreign and typically less «white» populations. Thus between a growing number of Moslem healthcare providers, Hindu technicians, or Asian engineers and shopkeepers, the hegemony of heretofore white privilege has been challenged. Meanwhile, globalization and the free flow of information on the Internet, has exposed large numbers of people to much broader worldviews and perspectives than has hitherto been the case for a variety of reasons, ranging from the normalization of what had been deviant in the 1960s, the extolling of drugs and sex and rock 'n roll has become normative as well as the growing embrace of racial/ethnic inclusion, feminism and gay rights especially among youthful voters. Many younger people, have moved away from institutional often authoritarian religions and this includes many youth from evangelical backgrounds who moved away from the small towns of their parents to larger cities in search of jobs-often attending colleges and universities in the process where they are exposed to a variety of critical disciplines (social sciences, philosophy) and alternative views. In short, the heretofore privileged white, male, Christian identity, values, and lifestyles and have faced major demographic and cultural challenges and indeed, **these heretofore privileged identities, values and lifestyles are facing demise. This is the basis of political and cultural legitimation crises of today in which changing demographics and cultural change threaten the demise of certain «traditionally» privileged identities and certain corrupt, «illegitimate» elites are responsible. Such challenges and contestations of esteem granting identities evoke fear, anxiety anger and in turn reactionary leaders and politicians use these fears, anxieties and pains to manipulate certain populations into granting them support that ultimately used to advance the economic agendas of the elites and ironically indeed harms the very supporters that voted for them.** For

⁶ There is indeed an extensive social psychological literature showing how people believe «facts» if not rumors which supports their own identities and biases e.g. confirmation bias, while disregarding information inconsistent with their identities and values — disconfirmation bias. These two attitudinal factors constitute what is called «motivated reasoning» social psychological jargon to explain the people believe what they want to believe and go to great pains to keep facts, evidence and expert opinion from influencing their worldviews [Mooney, 2012].

⁷ It should be pointed out, that there were much greater rates of immigration to the United States in the late 1800s early 1900s, but most of these immigrants, not only tended to be Europeans however they were labeled, but most of these groups were concentrated in a few highly industrial cities and generally less visible to the population as a whole.

example a considerable number of Trump supporters would be adversely impacted by the ending of ACA (Obama care).

Consider only for example how many conservative governors have rejected federal government monies that would provide expanded health care services to many of the very people that support them while many such people are desperately needing better health care especially given the recent epidemics of opioid use. Insofar as many of the heretofore privileged white identities are highly authoritarian, these changes evoke levels of vitriolic hatred and intolerance, emotions which various political and/or cultural/religious leaders used to stoke the flames of anger and hatred, and such leaders, often cloaked in «populist» garb promise to avenge, punish and perhaps annihilate those corrupt and illegitimate elites seemingly to blame, and in the process restore a psychosocial *status quo ante* in order to draw support based on promises to restore a «community of memory» dwelling largely in a socially constructed imaginary of a lost «Golden age» rather than actual historical reality.

As is now quite evident, in much of the developed world, and even large segments of the developing world, these crises of political and cultural legitimacy have had a variety of emotional consequences which have prompted forces of reaction and the typical agenda of such reactionary forces has been the attempt to restore a «lost world» of the past⁸. And more often than not, this has led to the embrace of various reactionary movements and governments promising various authoritarian populisms, ethno-religious nationalisms and even neofascist mobilizations that would restore an often imaginary past and in turn create a glorious future. In such diverse countries as Russia, Turkey, Germany, or the United States, the nostalgic «yearning for yesterday» has disposed support for powerful leaders and parties that promised restoration. There are certain common patterns such as the support for the «strong leader», intolerance of democracy and the maintenance if not revival of religious nationalisms whether Russian Orthodox, evangelical Christianity in the US, or conservative Islam in Turkey that would restore a past greatness. This pattern has been most evident in the United States, where after a long period of decline following the embrace of neoliberalism, a growing right-wing coalition of billionaires, white nationalists and evangelical Christians enabled the Electoral College victory of Donald Trump a candidate supremely unqualified by virtue of personality, temperament, limited understanding of governance and indifference to facts/reality.

Otherwise said, and the heart of the present argument, is that the various authoritarian populisms, ethno-religious nationalisms and reactionary mobilizations, are basically attempts to preserve indeed restore a variety of heretofore identity-based privileges facing challenge and demise. Thus throughout modern history, we've seen various reactionary leaders and movements that would attempt to thwart social cultural change and return to that «better time». «The support for various types of authoritarian leadership is fueled by powerful emotions such that followers become impervious to any critiques or rational opposition to the policies of their «beloved» leader who would lead them to the «promised land» or at least the time of greatness.

⁸ In Marx's analysis of the coup of Louis Napoleon, he pointed out how the massive support by the French peasantry, was based on the restoration of the time when Napoleon Bonaparte gave peasants the land, but in the 40 or so years since, families grew, the land didn't, and the peasants faced hardships of mortgages and taxation.

Further fueling the anger and discontent that supports Trumpism, is the awareness of the extent to which segments of the more educated urban elites view the values and life styles and indeed racism and sexism and religiosity of the Trumpeters with disdain and condescension, if not ridicule and condescension. And surely when Hillary Clinton called these people a «basket of deplorables,» she indeed provided the perfect justification for these groups to loath the arrogance and condescension of her privilege and thus vehemently oppose her election. But this dialectic of educated elites vs less educated right, white populists has a long history (think Shay's rebellion, Whisky Rebellion, the Know Nothings and/or the KKK, etc).

Losing Our Country: One of the most common themes, clearly resulting from the various factors mentioned, has been the lamentation over the loss of one's country, America is in decline losing ground, people are feeling «left behind,» often while other groups, perhaps immigrants or minorities, are seen as making progress, and thus a major appeal of Trump was the promise of restoration, to «make America great again.» Or was it to «make America white again.» But it should be noted, that the major concern of this «decline» was not the general economic stagnation for most Americans, nor even the growing inequality, and surely not the decaying infrastructure, but the loss of what seem to be the heretofore dominant American culture of white, Christian, heteronormative superiority challenged by the growing diversity that has come from recent immigration, especially immigrants and refugees whose skin may be darker, and may perhaps embrace religions such as Islam or Hinduism. At the same time, we've seen more and more media and mass culture in which the stars, starlets, and talking heads called newscasters are no longer only white men, but increasingly include racial minorities and women. Finally, for most Americans, there has been a waning of racial and/or ethnic intolerance, and the growing embrace of various aspects of multiculturalism ranging from friendship and marriage, to taste in music, food and even mass culture. As will be noted, these trends are considered anathema, indeed the basis of «racial genocide» for certain reactionary groups. At one of the few generalizations we gain from the history of reactionary movements has been that they generally tend to restore a past that provided them with a sense of superiority but to a large extent that past exists more in their collective imaginary than actual history

Ressentiment: For Nietzsche [Nietzsche, 1994], *ressentiment* had a specific meaning that is not simply resentment, as disdaining or not liking something or someone, but an intense loathing toward the elites and the desire for revenge. *Ressentiment* is intertwined with envy a, desire to have for that which is disdained; repressed feelings and desires generate certain values that might be understood as «reaction formations.» [Scheler, 1972]. For Nietzsche, *ressentiment* the Jewish priestly class toward the Romans generated a transvaluation of ethical values. To summarize and simplify, the once powerful warrior- conquerors of Israel, had themselves become conquered by the Roman warriors who personified power, wealth and free sexuality. The now subjugated Jewish priestly class then embraced a «herd mentality» of subjugation that valued obedience, conformity, humility, poverty and asceticism-that were hence seen as «morally superior» to the wealth and power of the Romans, this provided a compensatory *ressentiment* for the now subalterns of Rome, that provided compensatory «status» of «moral superiority» rooted in revenge and envy. The rich and powerful Romans,

with their unbridled sexual indulgences might enjoy this life, but come the next world, they would burn in Hell for all eternity. Meanwhile the once humble, obedient ascetic Christians, created virtues out of necessity, extolling supplication, conformity, poverty and sexual frustration would spend eternity listening to angels playing harps. Surely an adequate compensation for lives of. Nietzsche's

... account of the conflict between the Roman warrior class and the Palestinian priestly class is reminiscent of Hegel's master/slave dialectic and prefigures Freud's use of mythological models of conflict. Scheler's phenomenological approach to resentment aims at an understanding of the condition as a whole and in its constitutive elements. Scheler was concerned with grounding an a priori axiological ethics through a phenomenological typology of the field of affectivity. An account of the heart would not be complete without an investigation of the corrosive condition of resentment... The members of the noble Jewish class, meanwhile, felt their powerful positions unjustly usurped by their conquerors, but were unable to openly retaliate. The Jewish priests did not simply resign themselves in humility to their inferior social position. **They had a deep sense of self-esteem and pride, and this fueled a simmering rage at their situation and hatred toward their conquerors**⁹.

Nietzsche's theory of resentment, a conservative if not reactionary politics of wrath and blame toward progressive politics in which the weak sought revenge indeed punishment of blameworthy elites provides powerful insights as to why major segments of the Trump coalition, fearing the demise of heretofore privileged identities, react with rage toward «establishment» elites and thus strongly identify with Trump's expressions of anger, vitriol, and disdain toward certain elites, while at the same time, he gives license for expressing aggression directed toward «marginal» racial, ethnic, religious, or gendered groups. The desire for revenge that provides compensatory self-esteem whether through the embrace of fundamentalist religion/evangelical Christianity, and/or «white nationalism,» identities and values that often overlap. Trump's disdain for establishment elites, Democratic or Republican, struck resonant chords with a vast number of American who felt they were being «left behind», their «country» and former privileged as white, and/or Christian and often male are facing a variety of challenges. What the illegitimate elites see as «good,» tolerance, inclusion charity, support for the sick, weak, or poor become seen as «bad» evil, and challenging the heretofore privileged identities. Reactionary politics, would or at least should a politics of inclusion and compassion and celebrate heretofore privileged identities based on religious morality, racial superiority racially and economic status. Following nature than the reactionary politics of Trump, authoritarian populism, can be seen as it would be «slave revolt» that would displace the weak, corrupt, seemingly «good» with the strong, the powerful and superior identities of privilege. Nietzsche strongly disdained equality and democracy, as especially evident in socialism and anarchism rooted in the spirit of revenge and hatred of the powerful that express the slave morality. characterized by *ressentiment*—hatred of the powerless seeking revenge and punishment against the powerful elites. It is an entirely negative sentiment, rejecting what is life-affirming, disdaining what is different, what is 'outside' or 'Other'. Resentment is characterized by an orientation to

⁹ Murray Morelli, Elizabeth, *Ressentiment and Rationality*. URL: <https://www.bu.edu/wcp/Papers/Anth/AnthMore.htm> (accessed will September 7, 2018).

the outside, rather than the focus of noble morality, which is on the self. It is of course ironic that the authoritarianism of Trump supporters in fact sustains a herd mentality that disdains expressions of nonconformity and individuality.

Pseudo-populism

Populism is generally considered as a popular uprising, a political expression of «ordinary people» who constitute a morally benevolent force or are opposed to the policies and practices of certain elites that are perceived as corrupt, illegitimate, and self-serving whose policies benefit themselves and/or their class rather than the people who elect them and typically pay their taxes. Most traditional populisms have promised and sometimes delivered actual material benefits to the people who've been victimized by unscrupulous, illegitimate elites who've used their positions to enhance their own self interests. Some of the well-known populists in American history, Andrew Jackson, Huey Long, notwithstanding being racists, nevertheless provided jobs and benefits to many people. But what becomes evident today, is, in the words of observer Chauncy De Vega, is that the Republican Party has become quite psychopathic, perfecting «political sadism,» oblivious to the feelings of others (especially the pains the policies cause, they disregard for social norms and obligations, have a low frustration tolerance and propensity to express aggression, they have a limited capacity to experience guilt, while prone to lying and deception, and impulsiveness¹⁰. Republican leadership under Trump provides what historian Timothy Snyder has called «sado populism» in which the «people», and that means many of the people who supported Trump, are less likely to get benefits from government largess, in fact Republican policies are likely to hurt many of their supporters who stand to lose many of the very benefits and safety nets that they already possess — not the least of which are subsidized healthcare, food stamps, rent subsidies etc¹¹. But instead of gaining material benefits from chumps agendas,, they get to express their anger; they can openly display their racial hatreds, ethnic animosities, their antipathy toward foreigners and contempt for women seeking inequality. Collectively, these groups, and their movements toward equality and justice threaten the increasingly untenable privileged albeit conservative identities. **And above all, Trump supporters get to articulate their *ressentiment* to the corrupt and illegitimate elites who have pushed the various programs and agendas that have challenged and indeed undermined the heretofore privileged, conservative racist, sexist, Islamophobic and/or homophobic identities.**

[S]uch a voter is changing the currency of politics from achievement to suffering, from pain to gain, helping a leader of their choice establish a regime of sadopopulism. Such a voter can believe that he or she has chosen who administers their pain, and

¹⁰ DeVega, C. Pain Is the Reward: Here's What Pundits Keep Getting Wrong about Trump and His Supporters. <https://www.salon.com/2018/04/13/pain-is-the-reward-heres-what-pundits-keep-getting-wrong-about-trump-and-his-supporters/> (accessed September 10, 2018).

¹¹ As many have noted, many extremely rich corporations such as Walmart, Amazon, rely upon government programs such as food stamps and Medicare to supplement the meager wages they pay so the result is that the taxpayers, subsidize the vast wealth of such corporations-which is clearly why they fall so much money to Republican candidates likely to oppose raising minimum wages, support single-payer health care, paid parental leave etc. notwithstanding the unprecedented wealth of these corporations, and their upper echelon executives, their unbridled greed has led to vast suffering and deprivation by close to half of the population in which everyday survival is often thwarted by various hardships.

can fantasize that this leader will hurt enemies still more. ... If people who support the government expect their reward to be pain, then a democracy based upon policy competition between parties is endangered¹².

Thus to see such movements as populisms, movements in which the morally «decent» ordinary people seek actual benefits denied by incompetent, corrupt and/or illegitimate elites, is to cloak these various racist, ethnocentric, xenophobic, homophobic Islamophobic movements and tendencies in a mantle of respectability in which the «ordinary» and decent people, often God-fearing, seek to restore identities of privilege facing demographic, cultural and indeed political challenges.

PART II: THE TRUMP VOTERS

We should first note, that unlike many parliamentary democracies, the United States has a two-party system and while in practice, both parties have traditionally supported neoliberal capitalism, and American imperialism and interventionism, there are major differences between the parties based on their constituencies that constitute various often diverse constituencies that nevertheless joined together within political parties. One major difference between the parties, is that the Republican Party, tends to be overwhelmingly white whereas the Democratic Party includes a wider range racial and ethnic differences. Democrats are more likely to be urban, especially in coastal cities, a bit more educated and quite often, possessing a bit more cultural capital. But for the present purposes, the first point that needs to be noted is that one difference between the parties, **is that Republicans tend to be more tribal that is are more likely to vote for whoever is on the ticket.** Democrats, are more likely to stay home rather than vote for an unfavored candidate. And surely as we know, this was the case in 2016 as a number of Democrats, especially minorities, and especially young voters disdained Hillary Clinton and stayed home. Many of these constituencies were highly disappointed that the elites who control the Democratic Party ensured that Bernie Sanders did not get the nomination. Thus even though there are more Democrats than Republicans, Republicans, typically older, more affluent, and as was said more tribal, are simply more likely to vote than are Democrats, and likely to vote for the standard-bearer of their party regardless of who he (and so far it's always been a he) may be. But this tells us little and we need to more carefully examine the Trump coalition.

The economic elites: Although the economic elites are not just the billionaire classes, typically supported by a large number of affluent upper-middle-class executives, professionals and/or entrepreneurs who typically support the conservative economic agendas of the elites¹³. While small in numbers, with vast economic resources, millionaire and billionaire classes have a great deal of power in shaping the outcomes of elections and influencing the policies of the elected— who begin to organize for their reelection on the first day of taking office. And while it is true that in 2016, the Clinton campaign outspent the Trump campaign a good part of his victory was nevertheless

¹² DeVega, C., Pain Is the Reward: Here's What Pundits Keep Getting Wrong about Trump and His Supporters. <https://www.salon.com/2018/04/13/pain-is-the-reward-heres-what-pundits-keep-getting-wrong-about-trump-and-his-supporters/> (accessed September 9, 2018).

¹³ This is not to suggest that all upper income upper income professionals and executives support conservative agendas, viz. varies by race, ethnicity, region and particular industries etc.

based on support of various conservative if not right wing economic elites, aided by the legacy of Citizens United, that, provided a great deal of cultural and financial support. Moreover, Trump was helped by the propaganda of the many right-wing media outlets, not least of which, was Fox News. A long tradition of political analysis, perhaps beginning with James Beard's analysis of the Constitution that permanently empowered the economic elites, or the more recent work of) political policies and agendas are largely shaped by the economic elites, and the majority of such elites, tend to be in privileged economic positions/industries that support Republican candidates. As Gillens and Page [Gillens, Page, 2014] put it:

Multivariate analysis indicates that economic elites and organized groups representing business interests have substantial independent impacts on U.S. government policy, while average citizens and mass-based interest groups have little or no independent influence. **The results provide substantial support for theories of Economic-Elite Domination and for theories of Biased Pluralism**, but **not** for theories of Majoritarian Electoral Democracy or Majoritarian Pluralism.

Thus as has been clearly evident, the majority of economic elites tend to be conservative right-wingers who typically support Republicans, regardless of their actual qualifications, and while Trump had no qualifications for the office, he did push through boilerplate Republican issues supporting the economic elites such as a massive tax cut that increased the wealth of Republican contributors- while attempting to cut or reduce social entitlements such as healthcare, reduce if not eliminate a variety of costly regulations regarding pollution, while eliminating raises for federal workers. Thus for the economic elites, the support for Trump, running as a Republican, was primarily based on economic self-interests¹⁴. What is of course amazing Trump was able to gain their votes without alienating what is a traditionally Republican moderate constituency -but it was quite evident that economic self-interest, trumped buffoonery and the majority of white men making over hundred thousand dollars a year to support Trump. Moreover, Trump was helped by the propaganda of the many right-wing media outlets, not least of which, was Fox News.

Evangelical Christians: A major constituency in the Trump coalition, consisted of the evangelical Christians, also known as the «Christian right.» Although not clearly tied to class position as such, most come from the lower middle classes, especially the older, more likely rural or exurban people, especially in the South, who strongly embrace a variety fundamentalist beliefs perhaps beginning with creationism, the inerrancy of Scripture, the complementary relationship of men and women in so far as men are clearly «superior» to women, and what becomes extremely important in understanding American politics, the persistence a religious ideologies in shaping notions of America as a Christian country (see [Langman, Lundskow, 2017]). In 2018, 17 % of the electorate were evangelical Christians and 81 % of them supported Donald Trump, a thrice married man, notably highly promiscuous, proudly Friday himself as a «pussy grabber,» little schooled in religion, long involved in shady, irregular and perhaps indeed clearly

¹⁴ It should be noted however that not all economic elites are indeed Republicans, certain industries such as banking and finance, real estate, construction, energy, and defense are predominantly Republican while much of mass media/entertainment, digital media companies (Silicon Valley) are more likely to be predominantly democratic or in some cases libertarian.

fraudulent business practices, was hardly the exemplar of Christian virtues such as honesty modesty, humility, charity and compassion. How then could be embraced by the various leaders of evangelical Christianity such as Hagee, Graham, Falwell, Dobson etc.? His candidacy and election were seen as the «will of God.» Simple, ever since the 60s, the Republican Party, in need of an expanded constituency, embraced conservative Christians, and promised to maintain their values that might include prayer in the school, opposition to abortion, opposition to sex education, opposition to teaching evolution, in exchange for their votes-needed to gain electoral victories for their own agendas more closely tied to increasing the wealth of their major supporters. In other words, while most of the Republican leaders couldn't give a rat's ass about creationism, abortion or sex education, the evangelical vote became necessary to win elections determining tax policies, tariffs, business regulations etc. that in the past several decades, have led to the growth of the practically unprecedented levels of economic inequality seen today when three men have as much wealth as half of the American population, and mega corporations with offshore incorporation and banking, pay little or no taxes. As has been noted, evangelicals have been promised ending abortions what they got was unemployment, there were promised to sustain prayer in the schools but they got were business closings, they were promised gay marriages would be outlawed what they got was the acceptance of gay marriages together with massive tax cuts undermining roads, education, and infrastructure in general. As the Christian historian John Fea [Fea, 2018] argued Evangelical support for Trump was based on fear of demise, retaining if not gaining their cultural and economic power, and finally, the nostalgic yearning to return to a past time, when power was unchallenged Thus the election results showed that Donald Trump, much like most other Republican candidates, played the emotions of the Evangelical Right like a fiddle and secured their votes and loyalty that helped put him in the White House.

Alt Right and the White Nationalists: How could slavery be justified in a nation founded upon the notion that «all men were created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights.» This was simple, African slaves were not considered fully human and given their subordinate positions economically, culturally, politically, they could not be defined as «men» entitled to certain guaranteed rights. Thus these economic and political factors gave rise to racism, initially based on their economic position and exclusionary politics, but even more salient, the privileges of whiteness became an essential moment of identity within the slave states such that while the majority of white men who themselves tended to be relatively poor, nevertheless, their white skin gave them a modicum of «superior» status and «inclusion» into the dominant and superior race that was so powerful, that most were willing to give life and limb to the Confederate cause. The loss of the Civil War did little if anything to abate that racial prejudice and indeed, created the groundwork for the fear of what was earlier noted «race genocide» that is the demise of the superiority of whites whether numerically culturally or both. As a long history of racial intolerance in America must consider such diverse expressions as the KKK, or the eugenics movement. Fast forward to today.

While as has been noted, Trump supporters were not necessarily economically distressed as such, mobilizing against neoliberal globalization as such. Rather, the social and political changes of the last few decades, from the time the civil rights bill

was passed until the election of an African-American president, tendencies toward greater inclusiveness, have been perceived by many as threatening, undermining preservation of white racial identity located in a white majority nation. These changes, previously noted as leading to fears of «racial extinction» have generated a great deal of fear among the many whites regarding the future of their white superiority-fears that are well grounded in demographic and cultural change that suggest the erosion if not end of white supremacy and the various aspects of social life dependent on the «unquestioned» power and status of whiteness that provides certain groups with a variety of social and personal gratifications.. It is because increasingly evident that white people will be a minority of the population of the United States within a few decades Thus we see growing racism, intensified by the election of an African-American president, as well as anti-immigrant sentiments — especially Mexican refugees- and only a wall can stop their influx and the «threat» to white nationhood. The oppression and exclusion of inferior groups, racial, ethnic, religious or sexual minorities is based on the fear that white extremists articulate when they proclaim «they will not be replaced.»

Closely tied to the fear of demise, is of course anger not simply to various racial or ethnic minorities, but to the corrupt, liberal elites who of tolerated, if not encouraged the growing diversity-while they remain luxurious enclaves. While typically these elites tend to be Democrats dependent on minority votes, the illegitimate and corrupt elites would include Republicans like George Bush with a Colombian wife and he dared to speak Spanish or even Mitch McConnell who married a Chinese woman¹⁵. Thus today, while racism harkens back to earlier eras, we see an ultraconservative mobilization that sees itself as the «genuine» right wing, unlike various pretenders, often themselves elites, who are indifferent to the preservation of white privilege-indeed many of these elites favor liberal immigration policies that would bring in «darker» peoples to work in various high-tech/finance industries.

The alt.right whites nationalists that include elements of the KKK, various white supremacists, neo-Nazis etc. constitute the very core of the Trump base, attending the rallies for Trump, demonstrating against minorities, immigrants refugees etc. are not located within a particular class, but draw upon a number of classes especially the historically reactionary petty bourgeoisie and segments of the working classes (see below). Moreover, they are often well-funded by some of the more extremist elements among the economic elites. But that said, in general, they do tend to be less educated, more likely rural or exurban, and while found throughout the United States, they do tend to be more concentrated in the southern and western states.

The Petty Bourgeoisie: In his analysis of the French peasant farmer support for Louis Napoleon, Marx demonstrated how the petty bourgeois (lower middle classes) were typically the bearers of reactionary ideologies disparaging both communists and financial elites, and likely to support «seemingly powerful leaders.» Furthermore, the French peasant farmers, took great pride in the French armies and hailed their imperialist exploits especially in Africa and Asia. I Marx called this pattern «Bonapartism», which has served as a template for understanding later 20th century right wing if not

¹⁵ This reactionary nationalism often become so bizarre that there was a criticism of both John Terry and Milt Romney who dared speak French. Dare we be reminded that it was French arms, French money, and French military acumen that enabled the 13 colonies to win their independence!

fascist movements. But the essential point is that the petty bourgeois classes, small landowners, merchants, artisans and lower echelon state officials, tend to be highly authoritarian and provide the bulk of support for various conservative often religious political parties. Moreover, the petty bourgeois classes, well economically quite similar to the working classes, tend to have «status anxiety» in that their small businesses often artists services, are little able to withstand economic vagaries. The lower echelon state officials, typically identify with the institutions of the government for which they work, and thus typically embrace authoritarian support for power. It might also be noted that in the United States, various real estate and construction companies, including providers of building materials, tend to embrace conservative if not reactionary political agendas, disdaining any forms of government regulations, the gladly accepting government subsidies, and/or various entitlement programs, especially welfare and government provided health care. Finally, the lower middle classes, generally tend to be more religious, and members in the more conservative if not fundamentalist, religious denominations especially Southern baptism and/or more conservative Catholic churches in some it is no surprise that the white petty bourgeois classes tend to support Republican Party candidates and indeed, strongly supported Trump

It is clearly evident that none of these three constituencies can by themselves win elections and despite contradictions between free trading elites and protectionist nationalists, hedonistic seculars and pious Christians, Trump as billionaire, Trump as «working-class» everyman, and finally Trump as God's choice to restore virtue, was able to unite these constituencies to gain his Electoral College victory. But that said, his «victory» did require the votes of workers and flippers (Obama voters who flipped to Trump).

The Working Classes: It is of course true the large number of working-class whites supported Trump and most of the research has shown that they pretty much embraced his racism, sexism, xenophobia etc. But this is hardly a new pattern and was already clear in the 1960s when in face of the civil rights movement and civil rights legislation, an antiwar movement, a counterculture, and a sexual revolution, many working-class whites began to move away from union backed Democratic to the Republicans. With civil rights legislation eroding the racial bases of employment, union membership, and ending banking practices from redlining to discrimination, the working classes began to fear the economic consequences of racial equality beginning with fears of job loss, declining values of homes in integrated neighborhoods, resentment school integration often based on busing,. This often led to protests and/or relocations to wider, more Republican suburbs. Meanwhile, many working-class families had either relatives who had been in the service are quite often currently fighting in Vietnam whose patriotism, strongly supported American imperialism. For these families, the antiwar movement, was seen as a movement of traders and/or communists, who managed to avoid fighting to defend peace, freedom, justice and the American way-little understanding that that «American way» meant that corrupt right-wing dictators would be supported against the wishes of their peoples, millions of people would die, and billions of dollars would be squandered. At the same time that the antiwar movement grew, so too did a counterculture flourish, rejecting traditional and often religiously based norms of sexual behavior, modesty and drug use in which a large segments of youth extolled «drugs and sex and

rock 'n roll» all expressions of rejecting traditional authority. Again this disposed the embrace of law and order Republicans as was clearly seen in the support for Ronald Reagan who would clampdown on the «unruly» college students. Finally, just as there was resentment toward civil rights and racial equality, there was a similar resentment toward feminism, gender equality, and women's rights, including the right to own their own sexuality and reproduction. Thus feminism in the sexual revolution further fueled the movement of working-class whites to the Republican Party and with the exception of the 2008 election, they have remained a bastion of Republican support.

Obama switchers: One of the more interesting although small constituencies of the voters were the several million voters, flippers, who had supported Obama in 2008 and/or again in 2012 and yet supported Trump in 2016. Just who were they? In an exhaustive analysis of election data, Kliman [Kliman, 2018] concluded that «With respect to several key factors—immigration, authoritarianism, and attitudes to blacks, women, and Hispanics— their responses were far closer to those of other Trump voters, and often even further to the right». He reiterated what is been said before, that support for Donald Trump was more likely based on his racism, sexism and xenophobia, Trump's support for white typically Christian typically male privilege garnered their votes rather than actual rather than a rebellion against neoliberalism, and/or a reaction to economic distress. Most of these Obama voters, had been Republicans and what needs to be explained is why they had supported Obama in 2008/2016. As Kliman put it, «a large share of Obama-Trump voters were willing to vote for Obama when race was not a salient election issue but the overwhelming issue in 2008 was the problematic survival of the American economy after having been botched up so badly by GW Bush., The Obama to Trump voters lined up behind white supremacy when the prospect of its triumphant restoration became a serious possibility. Indeed as Kliman argued, much of the working class support for Trump had already been prefigured in the support for George Wallace and his clearly racist agenda embraced by the industrial working classes of the North, long before neoliberal globalization, robotics and financialization adversely impacted American workers.

PART III: POST TRUMP AMERICA

Truly, these are the times that try men's souls at least those men and women who have souls and capacities for caring, sharing empathy and decency-hallmarks of democracy, equality and freedom. Many scholars, journalists, and indeed politically concerned people raise questions about the future of democracy and ask if Trump represents a major step on the way to and especially authoritarian, if not perhaps quasi-fascist 21st-century America. Can it happen here? Since the Trump election, there is been a renewed interest in Sinclair Lewis' 1935 novel, *It Can't Happen Here*. As the New York Times appraisal notes:

The novel's Everyman candidate, Berzelius (Buzz) Windrip, is hardly a perfect stand-in for Trump. A creature of the Great Depression and a Democrat, Windrip sweeps into office as a quasi-socialist, promising \$ 3,000 to \$ 5,000 for every «real American family.» His movement style evokes the hyper-militarization of Nazi Germany rather than the anonymous jabs of the Twitter mob...Still, there are enough points of resonance to cause palpitations in the heart of any anxious 21st-century liberal. Like Trump, Windrip

sells himself as the champion of «Forgotten Men,» determined to bring dignity and prosperity back to America's white working class. Windrip loves big, passionate rallies and rails against the «lies» of the mainstream press. His supporters embrace this message, lashing out against the «highbrow intellectuality» of editors and professors and policy elites. With Windrip's encouragement, they also take out their frustrations on blacks and Jews¹⁶.

Sociology, perhaps social science in general, is an analytic approach not a basis for prediction that is for astrologers and tarot card readers. But we can identify certain trends that seem likely. Perhaps the most notable, has been the dialectical consequence of Trump and his unique brand or should we say blend of unbridled capitalism benefiting a small elites, racist white nationalism that includes a opposition to immigrants and refugees, especially those with darker skins and especially those who may embrace other religions besides Christianity, and finally evangelical Christians who seek to maintain America as a «Christian country preserve fundamentalist beliefs, the inerrancy of Scripture, patriarchy etc. A significant segment of this group believes that these are the «last days» and sometime in the very near future, we will experience the rapture, the return of Jesus and all good things.

But history acts and strange ways, indeed, as suggested by Hegel and Marx, dialectically, and this movement of history suggest that ironically, Trump and Trumpism may have very well mobilized a variety of progressive movements that will render the Trump era an unpleasant memory. To be more specific, as was argued at the beginning of this essay, we're at a moment of transition, an interregnum as Gramsci put it, but it is increasingly clear, that Trump has catalyzed a variety of progressive social movements that can be seen as «wars of position» that would transform society not simply return society to the *status quo ante*, but lead to a more progressive, inclusive, democratic society in which to heretofore privileged identities of race, religion or ethnicity have been relegated to the dustbins of history and a newer, more egalitarian, humanistic society emergent. Is this a fantasy? Perhaps not If for example we go back to the original Gilded Age of the late 1800s and early 1900s, also a time of extreme inequality, racism, and anti-immigrant, often anti-Semitic sentiments, there were also major mobilizations of various left progressive forces, including of course feminism, pacifism, and indeed unionization socialism and communism. The result of course with the election of Roosevelt who repaid the support of the progressives by markedly change the direction of the country in a variety of beneficial ways, job programs, Social Security, rebuilding the infrastructure, support for artistic creativity, and providing a democratic alternative to the authoritarian indeed totalitarian movements of communism and fascism.

So too do many of the conditions of today portend a radically different future.. More specifically, we see today a variety of progressive trends beginning perhaps with the more tolerant and inclusive society in which racism was on the wane-one reason for the growing intensity of the waning population of racists. Similarly, evangelical Christianity, is in rapid decline especially insofar as its population is not only aging, but the conditions of its appeal, face demise-many young people who grow up in such families have abandoned the faith.

¹⁶ Reading the Classic Novel That Predicted Trump. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/17/books/review/classic-novel-that-predicted-trump-sinclair-lewis-it-cant-happen-here.html> (accessed September 9, 2018).

Perhaps the most important moment of the progressive response to Trump and Trumpism, has been the widespread and indeed enduring support for Bernie Sanders who declares himself a socialist and what is especially remarkable is that today, the majority of the young people, prefer socialism seen as a system of greater equality, of more generous social benefits, of more meaningful work that provides dignity. Bernie Sanders, remains highly popular, for many segments of the country he is an inspiration and indeed, the Bernistas represent a large and growing challenge to the centrist, neoliberal domination of the Democratic Party. As is quite evident, in the midterm elections of 2018, unprecedented numbers of women, minorities and openly LGBTQ candidates are running for office. These progressive candidates are seeking more equitable society with a more democratic, representative governance not beholden to corporate money and influence.

As has been earlier suggested, we are now in a period of transition, an interregnum, not only a time of «morbid symptoms» but a time in which we see nascent and indeed growing progressive «wars of position» that would portend a saner, more decent, democratic, inclusive egalitarian society extolling freedom and creativity. How ironic that the catalyst for myriad of progressive movements of today would be Donald Trump! As Hegel put it:

History thus corroborates the teaching of the conception that only in the maturity of reality does the ideal appear as counterpart to the real, apprehends the real world in its substance, and shapes it into an intellectual kingdom. When philosophy paints its grey in grey, one form of life has become old, and by means of grey it cannot be rejuvenated, but only known. The owl of Minerva takes its flight only when the shades of night are gathering¹⁷.

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¹⁷ Hegel, G. *The Philosophy of Right*. URL: <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/pr/preface.htm> (accessed September 10, 2018).

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