

A New Agenda ... Values, World Society, Modelling

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A New Agenda seeks to explore all aspects of society using all the academic disciplines paying special attention to values ... with special interest in modelling ... not disinterested in practice ... and aspiring to high academic standards.

Commentary, November 2016

No. 35

Is Donald Trump the answer to the Steven Pinker v. John Gray debate?

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Part I Prelude

Flight from the centre ... “a crisis of faith in the global elite”

A flight from the centre was noted in the European Parliament elections of 2014 (Burt, 2016, 121-123). The same year, Neil Irwin talked about “in Scotland and beyond, a crisis of faith in the global elite” in his commentary on the Scotland independence referendum, 2014 (Burt 2016, pp. 205, 313). A flight from the centre was also to be seen in the UK general election, 2015 (Burt, 2017, Chapter 10, forthcoming); and in the Brexit referendum, 2016.

Political polarization in the American public, 2014

Before we consider the presidential election of 2016, it is worth noting that two years previously, in 2014, the Pew Research Center had identified heightened political polarization in the American public:

“How Increasing Ideological Uniformity and Partisan Antipathy Affect Politics, Compromise and Everyday Life

Republicans and Democrats are more divided along ideological lines – and partisan antipathy is deeper and more extensive – than at any point in the last two decades. These trends manifest themselves in myriad ways, both in politics and in everyday life. And a new survey of 10,000 adults nationwide finds that these divisions are greatest among those who are the most engaged and active in the political process.”

Pew Research Center. “Political polarization in the American public.” *Pew Research Center*. June 12, 2014. Accessed: November 22, 2016.

<http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/12/political-polarization-in-the-american-public/>.

Just as divisions are greatest amongst those most politically active, divisions may be greatest at times when politics has centre stage – such as during presidential elections.

Part II The USA presidential election, 2016

The year 2016 has been the year of the presidential elections in the USA. Hillary Clinton was always the favourite. In the Democratic primaries her victory was a foregone conclusion despite a strong challenge from Bernie Sanders, particularly in the rust-belt states of the Mid-West. Meanwhile a host of contenders in the Republican primaries were forced out one by one as a political outsider, Donald Trump, continuously built up support and finally defeated his one remaining opponent, Ted Cruz.

In the second half of the year Clinton was almost always ahead of Trump, sometimes just narrowly, sometimes by large amounts. Throughout the campaign both Trump and Clinton were haunted by scandal. In mid-October, as Trump again got mired in scandal, there was talk about how the Democrats might even win back the Senate. Clinton had her own scandal. At the end of October the director of the FBI announced an investigation of Clinton. The gap narrowed but even on election day – even as polls closed, a win for Clinton was expected.

But Trump triumphed – despite being slightly behind in the popular vote. (Opinion polls had indicated a somewhat larger Clinton lead.)

The primaries, January to June, 2016

An analysis of the primaries is given in the July 2016 *Commentary*, pages 10/14 to 24:

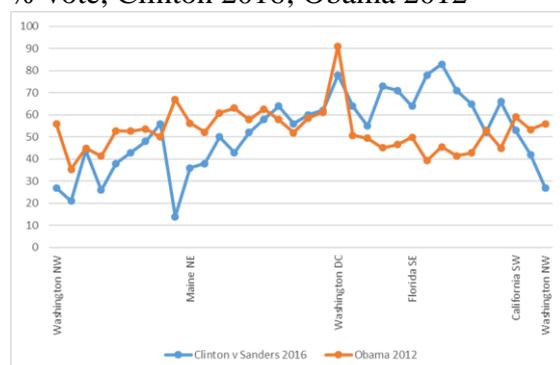
31 Trump, Clinton, Obama – political space and geographical space ... positivity and negativity
<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbnc3Jkb25idXJ0bWF0aHNvY3NjaXxneDo2NTRiNzdiYWQzNjQxZWlw>

In view of what was to happen on November 8, the following extract (page 20) is of interest:

“Figure 9 compares the perimeter profile for Clinton v. Sanders in 2016 with the profile for Obama (v. Romney) in 2012. In the west and north and north-east Clinton does worse than Obama; in the central east they do much the same; and in the south-east and south Clinton does better than Obama.”

Figure 9 The perimeter profiles for Clinton (v. Sanders) 2016; and Obama (v. Romney) 2012

% vote, Clinton 2016; Obama 2012



states round the perimeter of the USA, clockwise

Clinton v Trump, July to November, 2016

The presidential campaign itself saw dramatic events and corresponding fluctuations in the polls. Clinton was almost always ahead of Trump, sometimes just narrowly, sometimes by large amounts, the gap closing on four occasions in the period June to October with substantial Clinton leads in-between.

BBC. "US election 2016. US election poll tracker: who is ahead – Clinton or Trump?" *BBC News. US election 2016*. Accessed 22 November 2016. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-us-2016-37450661>

Throughout the campaign both Trump and Clinton were haunted by scandal. In mid-October, as Trump again got mired in scandal, there was talk about how the Democrats might even win back the Senate. Clinton had her own scandal. At the end of October the director of the FBI announced an investigation of Clinton. The gap narrowed but even on election day a win for Clinton was expected.

The last of the substantial leads for Clinton occurred in the third week of October:

"A Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll yesterday put Hillary Clinton's lead among likely voters at 11 percent, a margin that would translate into the most comprehensive victory since Ronald Reagan defeated Walter Mondale in 1984."

"Clinton is rigging the election, Trump tells his supporters."

Ben Hoyle, October 17, 35

"Hillary Clinton is targeting states that have voted Republican for decades as she gambles that she has the upper hand in the battle for the White House and ploughs resources into her party's attempt to recapture the Senate."

"Democrats target majority in Senate as Trump falters."

Blakely, Rhys and Deng, Boer. October 19, 31.

"Hispanic revolt in Republican states threatens to eclipse Trump."

Ben Hoyle, October 20, 30-31.

Just over a week later the FBI announced an inquiry into Clinton. The last ten days of the campaign saw the following front page headlines in *The Times* and *The Observer*.

"New Clinton FBI inquiry stuns voters in America. Email search reopened 10 days before election."

Blakely, Rhys. *The Times*, 29 October 2016: 1.

“Angry Democrats cry foul at new FBI probe into Clinton. Agency slammed over email inquiry. Jubilant Trump seizes on ‘scandal’”

Smith, David. *The Observer*, 30 October 2016: 1.

“Clinton lead slashed after FBI reopens email inquiry.”

Blakely, Rhys. *The Times*, 31 October 2016: 1.

[“Trump rejuvenated.”]

The Times, 1 November 2016: 1.

“Trump in the lead as race enters final week. New poll hits Clinton’s bid for the White House.”

Blakely, Rhys. *The Times*, 2 November 2016: 1.

[“Clinton corruption.”]

The Times, 4 November 2016: 1.

The final few days were more positive for Clinton:

[“Happiness is ... A three-point lead in the polls for Hillary Clinton ...”]

The Times, 5 November 2016: 1.

“Clinton and Trump hit crucial US swing states in final dash for votes.”

The Observer, 6 November 2016: 1.

“Clinton off the hook as FBI drops investigation into emails.”

Blakely, Rhys. *The Times*, 7 November 2016: 1.

“Surge in early voters gives Clinton edge over Trump. Record turnouts among Hispanics and women. Race for the White House still too close to call.”

Blakely, Rhys. *The Times*, 8 November 2016: 1.

Printed before the results were known, the papers on November 9th ran the following stories:

“A measure of America’s fever. Different as they were, both campaigns had one thing in common: Vitriol.”

Walsh, Declan. *The New York Times. International Edition*. 9 November 2016: 1.

“Endgame: America makes its move. ...

Americans queue to end months of acrimony that divided the nation ...

White share of turnout plunges to record low ...

Shooting outside polling station leaves one dead ...

It’s a big event for Britain’s bookmakers ...

Trump lawsuit accuses poll officials of breaking rules ...

Don’t interfere, US spy chiefs warn kremlin ...

Neither would enter office with a clear mandate ...

Decades of hard work made up for Clinton’s lack of star quality ...

Glass edifice was perfect venue for symbolic victory ...

Hawk Hillary has foreign policy top of her agenda ...

Lifetime as the outsider drove Trump to greatest gambit of all ...

Campaign ballroom starts to feel like last-dance saloon ...

Fears for future of Nato ...

Torrid campaign reflected a country riven by insecurities. Hostility of presidential rivals was both a symptom and fuelled by an angry electorate ...

[State of the nation]

Vote traders plotted to stop Trump ...

Hillary’s flaws have defined the US election. Only someone as self-righteous and deceitful as Clinton could have struggled so long against someone as bad as Trump ...

How Putin could win the White House race ...”

The Times, 9 November 2016: 1-11, 33, 34.

“At 7pm on the east coast of America ... at 11.40pm in New York”

“At 7pm on the east coast of America, with polling stations closing from Maine to Florida, Hillary Clinton and her team were feeling good about themselves and about the future.

Polling indicated that she had run up a safe lead in the popular vote and in the crucial states where presidential fortunes are sealed. College-educated white women and latino voters had turned out in droves. Emails circulated to campaign officials suggesting an emphatic win. The atmosphere was one of certitude.

Regional campaign teams prepared to emerge from their communications bunkers to join watch parties around the country, to make victory speeches and pop corks. ‘White House here we come’, they thought ...”

“... At 11.40pm, Trump headquarters in New York broke gleefully into song, the lyrics aimed at Mrs Clinton. “Nah nah nah nah, hey hey, goodbye.”

The result

Donald Trump won. The turnout was 53.8%, just 1.1% below the 2012 election. Donald Trump won 306 electoral college votes (57%) and Hillary Clinton won 232 (43%). Trump won 46.6% of the popular vote and Clinton won 47.8%. The remaining candidates won 5.6% with Gary Johnson, Libertarian, winning 3.3% and Jill Stein, Green, winning 1.0%.

United States presidential election, 2016

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election,_2016

The exit polls provided a breakdown of how different social groups voted.

Elections 2016: exit polls

<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/11/08/us/politics/election-exit-polls.html>

Polls, probabilities and predictions

Throughout the campaign Hillary Clinton remained the favourite. She was consistently ahead in the polls, initially by a large amount but the size of the gap fluctuated and narrowed. Towards the end a few polls showed Donald Trump ahead. As well as showing Clinton with a greater share of the individual vote, the polls were also used to suggest Clinton would win the college vote. In the event she won the individual vote by the narrowest of amounts but lost the college vote by a large margin and hence lost the presidency.

As a result there was criticism of the polls and scepticism about their value. The pollsters ‘had got it wrong’. For example Nate Silver ‘had been wrong’ when he said that Clinton had a two-thirds chance of winning. Daniel Finkelstein defended Nate Silver. To make this criticism of Nat Silver was to misunderstand the concept of probability. Clinton’s two-thirds chance of winning meant that she would lose a third of the times. Robert Worcester agreed with Finkelstein. (Similar considerations also apply to prediction in other fields. For example in football Finkelstein noted that: “the best side in the world probably won’t win the World Cup” (Burt, 2016, 262-275).)

Table 1 presents a comparison of opinion polls and the results. Opinion polls agreed with the results for the popular vote in that Clinton had more votes than Trump. However the polls disagreed with the results in that Clinton’s lead in the polls was greater than her lead in the results, 3.3% to 2.8% in the polls as opposed to just 1.2% in the results.

Table 1 A comparison of opinion polls and the results

	Four-way opinion polls verified as of November 8, 2016.	Results, popular vote
Clinton	45.3 to 46.6	47.8
Trump	42.0 to 43.8	46.6
C+T	87.3 to 90.4	94.4
Johnson	4.6 to 5.0	3.3
Stein	1.9 to 2.7	1.0
J+S	6.5 to 7.7	5.6
J+S+other	[9.6 to 12.7]	5.6

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nationwide_opinion_polling_for_the_United_States_presidential_election,_2016

Similar debates about the accuracy of the opinion polls have occurred in other elections: the Scotland independence referendum, 2014 (Burt 2016, pp. 191-193); Ireland’s same-sex marriage referendum, 2015; the UK general election, 2015 (Burt, 2017, Chapter 10, forthcoming); and the Brexit referendum, 2016. Following the UK general election, 2015, pollsters set up a group to investigate the gap between the polls and the actual result.

There is thus a distinction between the 2016 US election and the UK 2015 general election. In both cases what was stated to be the most probable outcome failed to occur. In the US case the actual outcome is consistent with the prior statement being true – according to Finkelstein and Worcester. In contrast in the UK case the actual outcome is not consistent with the prior statement being true – according to the pollsters themselves.

There was a great array of methods for trying to predict the outcome:

“There were many ways to try to [predict the outcome](#) of the 2016 (or any other) election.^[245] Since the advent of scientific polling in 1936, [opinion polls](#) have been a nearly universally accepted method to predict the outcome of elections throughout the world. More recently, [prediction markets](#) have been formed, starting in 1988 with [Iowa Electronic Markets](#).

Academic scholars have constructed models of voting behavior to forecast the outcomes of elections. An early successful model which is still being used is [The Keys to the White House](#) by [Allan Lichtman](#).^[246] [PollyVote](#) takes a simple average of six types of inputs: Prediction markets, index models, expert judgment, citizen forecasts, poll aggregators and econometric models.

For the 2016 election, there were many competing election forecast approaches including Nate Silver's [FiveThirtyEight](#), The Upshot at [The New York Times](#), [Daily Kos](#), Princeton Election Consortium, Cook Political Report, Rothenberg and Gonzales, PollyVote, Sabato and [Electoral-Vote](#).^[247]

These models mostly showed a Democratic advantage since the nominees were confirmed. Pollsters were puzzled by the failure of mainstream forecasting models to predict the 2016 election outcome.^{[248][249]} Further confusion was attributed to [The New York Times](#)' live presidential election forecast website for [misleading graphing](#) after analyst Alp Toker identified the use of [pseudorandom jitter](#) to give the impression of live fluctuations in its outcome predictions.^{[250][251]”}

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election,_2016#Forecasting
Further information: [Nationwide opinion polling for the United States presidential election, 2016](#) and [Statewide opinion polling for the United States presidential election, 2016](#)

Part II Some very brief notes

Is Donald Trump the answer to the Steven Pinker v. John Gray debate?

In 2013 the Conflict Research Society (CRS) gave a joint award of Book of the Year to Steven Pinker and Joshua Goldstein for their books on the historic decline of violence. In 2015 the CRS annual conference revisited the issue with talks by Scott Gates and Larry Ray. In his book, Pinker notes the contrast in the 1950s between the pessimism of Toynbee and the optimism of Lewis Fry Richardson. In 2015 there was a clash between the pessimism of John Gray and the optimism of A C Grayling; and Gray and Pinker clashed over the claim of a decline in violence.

John Gray: “Steven Pinker is wrong about violence and war ...”

Steven Pinker: “John Gray is not just wrong but flat-earth wrong ...”

And now, here I am, reading John Gray’s article in the *New Statesman* (18-24 November 2016, pp. 25-28) ...

“The iron law of oligarchy. Donald Trump’s victory has changed politics irrevocably. The age of unchecked globalisation and armed missionaries for liberal values is over. And we are entering a new age of great-power rivalry.”

... and now, with great irony, the advertising leaflet has dropped out of the copy of *The Economist*:

“In the global village, read the local paper.”

Trump: the implications for peace and conflict in the USA and in the world

My reading of John Gray followed sifting through the media coverage of Trump’s victory, and I was left musing the implications, in particular the implications for peace and conflict in the USA and in the world. I have set myself an agenda of questions:

How does Trump relate to ...

... the psychology of individuals?

... tensions within US society? ... tensions in the UK, in Europe and elsewhere?

... US politics? ... domestic politics in the UK, in Europe and elsewhere?

... the US economy? ... the world economy?

... military tensions throughout the world?

... cultures and ideologies within US society? ... in the UK, in Europe and elsewhere?

... experts, the public and us – our understanding of the world?

An initial list of topics in the news coverage of Trump's victory

In the period between 10th November and 16th November The Times and The Observer ran over a hundred Trump-related news items. An initial list of the topics covered is as follows:

<u>Trump</u>		exporters, trade,
psychology of Trump	closeness to Trump	liberalisaation
	Farage	bond market
<u>miscellaneous</u>	conflicting interests,	
Scotland pole	Trump	<u>similar elsewhere</u>
furnishings and		nationalism, policy
dwelling	moderating Trump	Italy, populism
descendant of Russian	U-turns	UK, v liberalism
		France le Pen
<u>campaign</u>	trump team	
poll predictions	policy position	<u>International</u>
campaign, Clinton	scandal	<u>organisation</u>
failures		Reform bodies
campaign, quality	personal security	
False news		<u>International relations</u>
FBI	family nepotism	defence of Europe,
		NATO
<u>result</u>	<u>migration</u>	Syria and Russia
flight from centre	Mexico wall	Russia
voting system	deportation,	Israel
	implementation,	China
<u>aftermath</u>	conflict, police	Japan
fractiousness about the		India
result	<u>economy</u>	UK Farage
	economy, infrastructure	UK
Democrat response	boost	politics
Trump opponents are	economy, banks, world	
the bigots		

The headlines in The Times on Day 1 of Trump's victory

The election was held on 8 November 2016. The results appeared in the UK press on Thursday 10 November 2016, accompanied by the following headlines.

“The New World. Donald Trump sends shockwaves around the globe.”

“You will be so proud of your president. You will be so proud.”

The many faces of Donald Trump. From Queens to president.

“America gives Trump a chance. Clinton and Obama urge support for shock election winner. Republican vows to ‘bind the wounds’ of divided nation. Europe offers wary backing.”

“Victor calls for unity as supporters go wild.”

“Speech unspun.”

“Clinton: accept defeat and look to the future.”

“You’re hired: rush to create White House ‘team of egos’.”

“Trump can make mark with big changes at swipe of his pen. This is what to expect in the first 100 days if president-elect keeps his campaign promises.”

“Speaker facing the chop over feud.”

“In his own words.”

“Angry working class turned out to help Trump seal the deal.”

“US election 2016. Presidential election results.”

“Pollsters are struggling to read the runes in voters’ revolt.”

“Jubilation gave way to shock and anguish. Democrats gathered for celebrations across the US were united in grief instead.”

“Spending twice as much could not guarantee win.”

“Twitter reaction.”

“Punter celebrates “100,000 windfall.”

“Glitz, glamour and gumption of a first family like no other.”

“Euro-fashion lends strange sheen to corridors of power.”

“The Trump family tree.”

“Presidential house fit for a property tycoon who dines on burgers.”

“Don’t listen to the doomsayers.”

“America’s allies are holding their breath as Russia toasts a western revolution.”

“Desperate blow for rebels in Aleppo.”

“Tories now see bold leader who embodies the spirit of Brexit.”

“Remarks they may come to regret.”

“As Trump pulls up the drawbridge, Europe may view Britain in new light.”

“Expatriates hear echo of referendum.”

“Farage seeks opportunities across the pond.”

“Trade wars loom and jobs at risk in new era. Winners and losers.”

“Spending binge will lead to rates rise.”

“Panicked markets regain composure.”

“Winner will borrow trillions as he bets on doubling growth.”

“Fall of the House of Clinton: loser bows out and wipes away a tear.”

“FBI chief ‘put paid to Democratic campaign’.”

“Celebrity backers ... who needs them?”

“Los Angeles fears its Olympic dream is in jeopardy.”

“The new America creates a dangerous vacuum. While Trump is sounding more conciliatory as president-elect, the threat to Nato and the world order is alarming.”

“Clinton didn’t lose because she’s a woman. Trump’s revolution cut across gender, class and age because he promised to end a rigged system.”

“Brexit and Trumpism are very different beasts. For all the apparent similarities, America has embarked on a more insular, mean-spirited course than Britain.”

“The bulging intray facing President Trump.” [7 letters]

“American revolution. The world’s first glimpse of Donald Trump as president-elect was reassuring. He could turn out to be a good ally for Britain.”

“No urgent need for a Trump dump.”

“Trump’s victory could also be the last straw for Europe’s political elite.”

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Pew Research Center. “Political polarization in the American public.” *Pew Research Center*. June 12, 2014. Accessed: November 22, 2016. <http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/12/political-polarization-in-the-american-public/>.