



## IN THIS ISSUE: THE TRENDS DRIVING TRUMP

Will Donald Trump be the next President? No one can say. But the political, economic and social trends that are driving his candidacy are of great interest and import, as they will persist whether he attains office or not.

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## 1 – NATIONALISM AND POPULISM

### [Timm Amundson](#)

Populism, at least Trump's version of it, is a platform built largely on the principle of economic nationalism. It focuses on three primary policy areas: trade, defense, and immigration. ...

With all of its faults, America is still the most generous nation in the history of mankind. For over a century she has been the engine through which so many other countries around the world have been saved, both economically and militarily. Through sound guidance and by example, she has proudly and effectively promoted the principles of free enterprise, and demonstrated

the prosperous results of market-based economics.

But, over the last 25 years in particular, in the name of globalism and the establishment of a new world order, the cost of America's generosity and influence has been placed squarely on the back of the American taxpayer, and it has had a devastating effect on the backbone of our society – the American middle class. America will always remain a loyal ally and a defender of freedom, and a fair and proactive international trading partner. She will always open her arms wide to a healthy and legitimate process of immigration. But she can no longer afford, financially or philosophically, to be the world's disproportionate benefactor.

## 2 – BARACK OBAMA'S LEGACY

### [A.D.P. Efferson](#)

If we take a central tenet of Trump's campaign – immigration – and apply the crisis intervention model to explain how this issue has caused a watershed of panic among his supporters, the calculus might look something like this: our government allows thousands of illegal immigrants to pour across our borders, plus this is a violation of the statutes governing immigration, plus distress because our country is no longer governed by the rule of law equals a generalized feeling of powerlessness.

You can replace the current administration's handling of any of Trump's key campaign positions and you'll still arrive at the same conclusion: a corporate sense of powerlessness and anger. This pattern of crisis reactivity may be the key to why many in this country seem primed for Trump's arrival.

Had there been any intervention of real leadership these past seven years, the mass feelings of dejection and helplessness among his supporters might have been avoided. Instead, Trump has capitalized on the general sense that our leader-

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ship has done little to nothing to stop executive overreach, administrative witch hunts, criminal activity, and outright lying about the brutal murder of Americans. Crisis theory would explain the reaction of Trump's supporters to the failing of our elected officials to address these calamities as an example of trauma persisting with no intervening help.

Right now, many Americans have this frantic

feeling that if they don't do something drastic they're going to be trapped in some of progressive hellscapes. Unfortunately, when people feel trapped desperate solutions become far more reasonable. And here we are. Crisis has made Trump the drastic and desperate solution. In him they see a champion, a straight-talker, a savvy business man who can get things done, someone who will stand up for American workers, and a guy who gets things done, whatever it takes.

### 3 – COLLECTIVISM

[Richard Ebeling](#)

The road from political, economic and social individualism to collectivist identity and privilege through group competition for political power is what has brought us to our current political crisis as captured in this year's presidential campaign. ...

This is the new America system: a democratic politics of power, plunder and privilege in a perpetual social conflict of social classes, racial groups and gender identities. It is a system in which the individual seems weak, small and powerless; and needing "leaders" who will use politics to bring them to the social, economic, racial and gender "promised lands" that are laid before the constituent-voters, if only this or that political

candidate is elected to set the world right for the benefit of a coalition of collective groups who want certain things and to which they are told they are entitled.

This the outcome of the journey from liberal individualism to political collectivism that has placed before us Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders, Donald Trump and a cast of other remaining candidates who sometimes speak the language of liberty but do so interwoven with inconsistencies and contradictions that leave the message of freedom with no fully principled spokesman in this year's race to the White House.

The path back to and forward towards liberty, therefore, will have to be journeyed far beyond the outcome of this November's election.

### 4 – DISCONTENT WITH GOVERNMENT

[Conrad Black](#)

No one can deny that Mr. Trump saw an opportunity and disclosed the existence of a massive voting bloc that all the experts, led by the Bush-Clinton joint incumbency that held great offices for eight straight terms (1981–2013), missed altogether.

Mr. Trump alone recognized the significance of

a few basic numbers, such as the percentage of Americans who think government officials are largely crooked – which increased between 2000 and 2015 from 30-something percent to between 50% and 60%, depending on whether they are Democrats, independents, or Republicans.

In the same period, the percentage of Americans who thought the federal government was run by

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a few big interests increased to about 70% from about 50%. (*Economist/YouGov* is the source for these numbers.) Economic data disclose that the middle class has been stagnant in wealth and purchasing power over that period, and the lower income groups, FDR's famous "one third of a nation," feel acutely threatened by the more than 11 million illegal entrants to the country and by trade pacts that they see as having exported traditional industrial jobs and as having imported unemployment.

Those collectively responsible for governing the country through the last 20 years, as these ominous levels of public discontent accumulated, showed no apparent recognition of the gathering storm.

One of Mr. Trump's talents is to harness the rage and fear of the low-income and marginal groups by his Archie Bunker routine, while maintaining contact with the party's moderates and the vast center of American politics by having relatively

uncontroversial views of most issues except illegal and Muslim immigration. Regularly, throughout the entire life of the Trump phenomenon, skeptics have foretold that the latest gaucherie or belligerent Trumpism would capsize his campaign. ...

Again, the voters will overwhelmingly support Mr. Trump: He has been excessively pilloried in the media, and most of the country is delighted that he doesn't truckle to the political press that most Americans regard as part of the corruption and complacency of the elites that have misgoverned the country for decades.

It will be an entertaining election. Mr. Trump has the sizzle: He's not complicit in the failures of the last 20 years, and he is new to politics, yet has huger name recognition. There is no more mud to throw at Mr. Trump. It is a bizarre turn and a startling gamble, but the great office is seeking Donald J. Trump, and will probably find him; he's hard to miss.

## 5 – PROJECTION AND PERCEPTION OF COMPETENCE

### [Charles Lipson](#)

The public senses that, whatever Trump's failings, he is actually competent. That's a compelling proposition to many Americans, who don't think Washington bureaucrats or bloviating senators could organize a two-car funeral. ...

This powerful element of Trump's appeal has been hiding in plain sight. Voters haven't forgotten Washington's countless fiascos. They know, too, that hardly anyone in government is ever fired or held to account. They shudder at the costly, disastrous rollout of Obamacare and the lethal mess at veterans' hospitals. They remember the bungling after Hurricane Katrina, capped by George Bush congratulating his Federal

Emergency Management chief for a job well done. They remember Bush and his intelligence chief saying Iraq absolutely, positively had weapons of mass destruction and then compounding their mistake by launching a massive invasion with no plans to stabilize the country after overthrowing Saddam Hussein. They saw the same chaos erupt in Libya after NATO chased out Muammar Gaddafi and his thugs. Nobody bothered to think what would happen next.

To Trump voters, US Mideast policy under Democrats and Republicans alike is akin to building apartment towers without installing elevators – or, rather, leaving empty elevator shafts where stairwells should be – with equally disastrous results.

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They saw a US ambassador and three other Americans killed in Benghazi, followed by the administration's repeated false claims they were killed in a riot sparked by an Internet video. No one, except the filmmaker, was held to account. They saw an American president draw a red line in Syria, saying America would act decisively if Bashar al-Assad's regime used chemical weapons. When such weapons were used, America did nothing. They saw vacuous promises to roll back Vladimir Putin's annexation of Crimea. The list goes on and on.

Everybody, it seems, gets shuffled into a different

government job, pockets a bonus and pay raise, and eventually becomes a lobbyist. This dismal record of incompetence and corruption is bipartisan. Primary voters in both parties know it, and they feel betrayed by it.

A big part of Trump's appeal is his promise to stop this marathon of malfeasance. That's a compelling message when Americans have a palpable sense of national decline and believe their government is failing to meet its core responsibilities. With a bittersweet slogan printed on his cap, Donald Trump promises to reverse all that and "make America great again."

## 6 – A BELEAGUERED WORKING CLASS

### [Charles Murray](#)

If you are dismayed by Trumpism, don't kid yourself that it will fade away if Donald Trump fails to win the Republican nomination. Trumpism is an expression of the legitimate anger that many Americans feel about the course that the country has taken, and its appearance was predictable. It is the endgame of a process that has been going on for a half-century: America's divestment of its historic national identity.

Two components of that national identity stand out. One is our Anglo-Protestant heritage, which has inevitably faded in an America that is now home to many cultural and religious traditions. The other is the very idea of America, something unique to us.

What does this ideology consist of? Its three core values may be summarized as egalitarianism, liberty and individualism. From these flow other familiar aspects of the national creed that observers have long identified: equality before the law, equality of opportunity, freedom of speech

and association, self-reliance, limited government, free-market economics, decentralized and devolved political authority.

As recently as 1960, the creed was our national consensus. Today, the creed has lost its authority and its substance. What happened? Many of the dynamics of the reversal can be found in developments across the whole of American society: in the emergence of a new upper class and a new lower class, and in the plight of the working class caught in between.

In my 2012 book "Coming Apart," I discussed these new classes at length. The new upper class consists of the people who shape the country's economy, politics and culture. The new lower class consists of people who have dropped out of some of the most basic institutions of American civic culture, especially work and marriage. Both of these new classes have repudiated the American creed in practice, whatever lip service they may still pay to it. Trumpism is the voice of a beleaguered working class telling us that it too is falling away.