

Why did Trump win, and Harris lose?

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I offered some thoughts on why Trump won, and the Democrats lost in the US presidential election [yesterday](#). When doing so, I said I reserved the right to return to this issue and reconsider my position, and a day on, I want to offer some further thoughts.

A number of things need to be said at the outset. The first is that I do not think that the USA voted for populist fascism. They might get it. They might also get all the consequences of it, from increased prices to growth in corporate power to greater insecurity, lower wages, costly healthcare, poorer quality education, and very much more. I do not, however, think that is what they voted for, and I believe it is important to make the distinction.

There were, of course, some in the USA who understood and wanted this agenda.

There are others who undoubtedly want to rid the country of, as they see it, those who have arrived illegally, without considering the fact that the vast majority of Americans are descended from those who arrived illegally, because that's how the American population was originally built on the basis of those who came to its shores seeking a new home.

There were also those who voted for Trump thinking he has a messianic role.

I do, however, think that the fanatics are a decided, whilst vocal, minority of those who voted for Trump.

Many more who did so and tipped the balance in his favour voted for Trump because nothing that the Democrats were suggesting looked to be meeting their needs. It was not what they said that mattered, although there were decided problems with their messaging that was too often condescending in tone. It was what they have done that mattered. Even saying that, though, is not enough because their core problem is not what they have done but what they have not done.

The Democrats have become the party of a middle higher management elite that has

done well from a financialised USA, and wants nothing to disrupt what it might deliver for them as a consequence.

Bankers were not held accountable after 2008, and instead, they did very well during that crisis.

The same might also be said to be true of the Covid crisis, where some in the USA did very well out of the financial support supplied to businesses and even households.

The Democrats have not tackled inequality.

The Democrat schemes for healthcare might now be under threat, but if, despite them, you faced the risk of bankruptcy because of ill health, they provided little in the way of comfort.

And when inflation is taken into account, Democrat control of the White House in 20 of the last 32 years has not resulted in any significant real pay rises for working-class and lower-middle-class America. Most now do, at best, feel no better off than they did at the start of the Clinton era and in a political system where growing incomes is the chosen indicator of success, the Democrats seem to have failed.

When, alongside that, growth has been allowed to massively increase inequality, with that inequality being flaunted in a media all too willing to project its reality to those who are struggling, then nothing has prevented that from being noticed.

People did not vote for Harris because - fear of Trump apart - she gave them no reason to do so.

When asked about her policies, she arrogantly pointed people towards her website, where illumination was not forthcoming.

When asked to differentiate herself from Biden, she could not or was not willing to do so.

When challenged about her vision, it was apparent that she had none. Maintaining the status quo that clearly does not function for the majority of people in the USA is not a vision. It is, instead, a rather poor management policy.

Trump's victory is not, in that case, a ringing endorsement of all that he will be doing, whatever he would like to claim. Nor does it suggest that most Americans believe in what he is offering. I very much doubt that they do. Instead, what people are saying is that more of the failed neoliberal same is not what they want. Trump offers a difference, and that is good enough at this moment, even if the consequences for those who voted for him might well be dire.

So what do people want? In no particular order, I suggest:

- * Wages sufficient that people might live upon them and maintain their families
- * A social safety net if everything goes wrong
- * Affordable homes
- * A guarantee of healthcare
- * Fair provision for old age and care in it
- * Decent education for their children
- * A planet that is safe in the future
- * A sense of security
- * A sense of pride
- * A feeling of participation
- * A sense of hope
- * The chance to live and not just survive

I have no doubt that this could be improved, but the point is that these are basic things that far too many people cannot enjoy, whether in the USA or elsewhere. Enormous wealth has not delivered the fulfilment of basic needs to most people in countries dominated by neoliberal thought. There can be no surprise that people now feel alienated by those now promoting that thinking.

It is my belief that in many ways Trump is an arch neoliberal, most especially when it comes to the unleashing of corporate power. However, he was not perceived in that way by this electorate and won as a consequence.

So, the political question for this moment, and for our time, is how do we deliver those most basic of needs to everyone that ensures that people can live the lives that they want? Unless political economy is about that, then what is it for, and what is our discussion here for?