

Mid-Term Divisions: The Trump Take: “Defeat is Victory”

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Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [History](#)

President Donald J. Trump has a special, strained take on the world. Defeat is simply victory viewed in slanted terms. Victory for the other side is defeat elaborately clothed. Both views stand, and these alternate with a mind bending disturbance that has thrown the sceptics off any credible scent. “It wasn’t me being slow,” [came](#) Frank Bruni’s lamentation in The New York Times. “It was America.” Dazzlingly unsettling, the results has been tight “but many of the signals they sent were mixed and confusing.”

Those daring to make predictions that the House would fall to the Democrats were not disappointed, even if they could not be said to be spectacular. Losses to the incumbent party in the White House in the mid-terms tends to be heavy, varying between 24 and 30. President Barack Obama’s presidency bore witness to 63 loses to his party in 2010. On this occasion, the GOP yielded ground in Colorado, Florida, Kansas, Minnesota, New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia.

The Senate, just to press home the sheer polarity of the results, slid further into red territory. Joe Donnelly of Indiana, who had, in any case, been deemed quite vulnerable in the state, [fell](#) to Mike Braun. Braun was one who drank from the cup of Trumpism, a move which seems to have paid off. Missouri Democratic senator Clair McCaskill succumbed to Republican challenger Josh Hawley. North Dakota also turned red.

The Democrats showed [some](#) resurgence in various state level capitols. Key governor’s seats were reclaimed, though their victories in Illinois, Michigan, Nevada and Wisconsin were matched by Republicans clawing on to Florida. The governor’s offices of Arizona and Ohio also remained in the hands of the GOP. The [defeat](#) of Republican Scott Walker in Wisconsin was particularly sweet, given his lingering dedication to the abridgment of union rights that resulted in an effective end to collective bargaining for public workers.

Moving aside the gripping minutiae and individual bruising, and the US is a state fractured and splintering, putting pay to such notions as “waves” of any one party coming over and overwhelming opponents. Walls – psychic, emotional and philosophical – have been erected through the country.

Rural areas remain estranged from their urban relatives; urban relatives remain snobbishly defiant, even contemptuous, of the interior.

“The midterms,” [came](#) a gloomy Mike Allen in Axios AM, “produced a divided Congress that’s emblematic of a split America, drifting further apart and pointing to poisonous years ahead.”

The angry voter was very much in vogue, be it with record liberal turnouts in suburbs, or high conservative voter participation in Trumpland.

What Trump succeeded in doing after the mid-terms was implanting himself upon the GOP, grabbing the party by the throat, thrashing it into a sense that their hope of survival in the next two years rests with him. He could blame losses on Republicans who decided to keep him at tongs length, those who “didn’t embrace me”, while Democrats who sided against his choice of Supreme Court justice Brett Kavanaugh were duly punished.

Trump could also smirk with excitement that the punditry is still awry about how to assess the US political landscape. Republican pollster Frank Luntz [insists](#) in a magical two to three percent “hidden Trump” vote that analysts refuse to factor into their calculations.

The news conference in the East Room provided Trump the perfect platform to spin, adjust and revise. He also reverse heckled, striking out at journalists with brutal surliness. PBS reporter Yamiche Alcindor was accused of asking a “racist question” in pressing for his position on white nationalists. “It’s a very terrible thing that you said.”

He could also weigh heavily into his favourite playground targets, one being CNN’s Jim Acosta.

“CNN should be ashamed of itself, having you working for them. You are a rude, terrible person. You shouldn’t be working for CNN.” (The politics of playground fancy also took another turn, with Acosta’s accreditation subsequently suspended “until further notice” by White House press secretary Sarah Sanders.)

As has been frequent, if scattered, the president was not entirely off the message in attempting to reason the results. The “wave” that was supposedly to come from the Democrats had not exactly drowned the GOP, and in terms of performance, he could happily point to a Republican increase of numbers in the Senate.

He then brandished a weapon he has mastered since he became president: the art, less of the deal than the diversion. Within hours of the results coming in, Attorney General Jeff Sessions came another addition to the long list of casualties that has made this administration particularly bloody. Zac Beauchamp [supplied](#) a depressed note in Vox: the sacking of the marginalised and mocked Sessions was not shocking, which made it worse, a sort of normalised contempt.

“The truth is that Trump firing Sessions, and temporarily replacing him with a loyalist named Matthew Whitaker who has publicly denounced the special counsel investigation, should scare us.”

Trump, for his part, [anticipates](#) “a beautiful, bipartisan type of situation” working with Democrat House leader Nancy Pelosi. “From a deal-making standpoint, we are all much better off the way it turned out.” Far from being further rented, the chances for legislation have presented themselves, though the president was just as happy to issue a slap down warning: avoid initiating any investigations. “They can play that game, but we can play it better because we have the United States Senate.” As the dark lord of the Bush era, Karl Rove, surmised with apposite force: “Let’s be clear... Both parties are broken.”

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