

Trump wins: what's next?

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Donald Trump scored a stunning victory over Hillary Clinton on Tuesday. This is an election that political analysts will be debating for some time to come. How did this happen and what does Trump's victory portend, both domestically and internationally? LSE US Centre Director, [Peter Trubowitz](#), offers some provisional thoughts on these issues.



What explains Trump's victory?

Many things obviously: a politically vulnerable opponent, lower voter turnout, FBI Director Comey's decision to reopen the investigation into Clinton's emails, among other things. But at the end of the day, the single biggest factor was Trump's ability to recognise and tap into a well of anger and resentment in the American body politic that others missed. Trump's whole campaign was predicated on the assumption that there was a "missing white voter" — a large group of non-college-educated voters who had been sitting out presidential contests and would vote Republican if they were offered policies that spoke to their grievances about Washington, globalism, and multiculturalism. That theory was put to the test Tuesday and it held up. [Exit polls](#) show that white voters backed Trump 59 to 39 percent. But it was among the non-college educated blue collar voter (historically Democrats) that Trump's strength proved decisive. He won that group 67 to 28 percent. This is what allowed him to capture pivotal Democratic states like Pennsylvania and Wisconsin and possibly, Michigan (the vote is still too close to call) and thus win the Electoral College while losing the popular vote. African-American and Latino voters voted overwhelmingly for Clinton, but the numbers were well off Obama's share in 2012 and were not enough to compensate for Trump's strength among white voters. Indeed, despite Trump's inflammatory rhetoric about Mexican-Americans, he won 29 percent of the Latino vote. Fifty percent of millennials supported Clinton, but that is 5 percent less than backed Obama four years ago. In the end, Trump's gains among white voters, especially in [rural America](#), were just too much for Clinton's strength in the big urban parts of the country to overcome.

What will Trump and the Republicans do with their victory?

The Republicans are in a strong position to initiate some big changes on the domestic policy front. Trump has called for deep tax cuts, repealing Obamacare, and turning Medicaid into block grants for states, which would leave it to the mercy of many Republican state governors. These are policies that Paul Ryan and other conservative Republicans in Congress can easily support. On the spending side, Trump has been calling for increased defence spending and especially, infrastructure spending (e.g., roads, bridges, airports). The former will enjoy broad support among conservative Republicans. The latter will find more favour with Democrats, but also with many of those non-college educated voters who came out to vote for Trump yesterday. We might see Trump push this as a way to soften the blow that comes from any efforts to rollback entitlements.

Trump's victory also puts him in a position to initiate change on the international front — something he talked a lot about on the campaign trail, and that puts him at odds with many Republicans in Washington. In particular, Trump has taken aim at free trade agreements, liberal immigration policies, and security alliances like NATO. I think he has more running room here than many in Washington believe, especially when it comes to trade matters. While Republicans like Paul Ryan are free traders, the exit polls in key states like Michigan and Pennsylvania (which effectively put Trump over the top in the Electoral College) show that a majority of rank and file Republicans oppose free trade agreements like NAFTA, TPP and TTIP. Ryan and his fellow Republicans on Capitol Hill will need to tread very softly here. The Speaker of the House might conceivably try to push Obama's TPP trade deal through during the lame duck session of Congress. But such a move entails risks for House Republicans in the wake of Trump's victory. It also assumes that Ryan not Trump will be setting the Republican agenda — a big assumption, I think.

What practical effect will Trump's victory have internationally?

Given Trump's attacks on America's long-standing security ties in Europe and Asia, US allies have ample reason to worry about the credibility of America's commitments to their security going forward. The question they will be asking from Seoul to Berlin is not whether Trump will make good on this threat or that threat. The question that is already being asked is whether they should be cutting their own deals with the most powerful countries in their respective regions – with China in East Asia, or Russia in Europe, and Iran in the Middle East. Meanwhile, Beijing and Moscow will be looking to see whether Trump's victory means that Washington will be willing to concede ground internationally in return for concessions on other issues (e.g. allowing Beijing greater sway in Asia in return to trade concessions). Trump may or may not make good on his plans to pressure America's allies to do more for themselves. We can't know; I doubt Trump knows himself. But the mere fact that Trump is in the White House will give friend and foe alike reason to rethink their options.

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