

As Trump takes power, what can journalists, politicians and the public learn?

blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2016/11/08/on-the-eve-of-the-most-bizarre-us-election-ever-what-can-journalists-politicians-and-the-public-learn/

2016-11-8

Can we stop talking about ‘the media’?

We’re all in this together. Post-Trump, post-Truth, post-Brexit. It really is time to end this worshipping at a broken shrine. As a journalist, I would secretly love the professional news industry to have the power that idealists, cynics and bystanders ascribe to ‘the mainstream media’. But it ain’t so. The politicians and public now (help) create the monster they revile.

[This was written on the eve of Trump’s triumph – but it all makes sense still]

It’s like the [UK media’s pathetic response to the EU referendum or Brexit](#).



Frankly, it’s not so bad. If you want fact-checks, data visualisations, historical context, instant breaking updates and lyrically waxing opinion, then journalism will give you that. It is straining every digital sinew tonight to bring you granular detail, sweeping oversight and critical takes. Even before that basic duty of reporting real results it is providing a banquet of information upon which you can gorge. A lot of it is [done to a turn](#).

If ‘the media’ is to [‘recover’ from this election](#) (along with numerous other ‘elections’ such as the UK General Election of 2015 and the EU referendum of 2016) then it must look unflinchingly at how, as usual, it has been

imperfect. It's only journalism, after all.

Though, I admit, the stakes are now higher. In a world of over abundance of information, of distortion, fakery and partisan relativism, even from the [well-intended](#), then yes, journalism needs to go back to basics as well as on to new frontiers.

But please stop pretending that journalism does this alone, like some superhero fighting villains against all odds. Mainstream politicians are ratcheting up the vicious cycle of cynical spin. Populist 'insurgents' are delighting in clothing their billionaire bodies in killer clown costumes.

And the voters. Better educated, better 'informed', more voiced than ever before, they are demanding clarity amidst the complexity of their distracted mediated political lives. I say to them, click on. It's there.

In a networked world where journalists are no longer the gatekeepers. we've seen how power and the people run amok. I celebrate that.

Media power is now distributed. Unevenly.

We got what we wanted. The data does not lie. Deal with it.

Journalists of any integrity (and I am continually amazed at the many who still have that) will want to be transparent, self-critical, innovative. They will survive and thrive against the economic odds.

But as always, journalism is a medium. As always, it ultimately depends on the will of the political class and the people themselves to want to engage. I see signs everywhere – even with the anger and the angst, that we are all learning to differentiate the signal from the noise.

If liberal democracy and the pluralistic, networked journalism that it has digitally spawned cannot survive this moment of populist, propagandist, marketing frenzy then it does not deserve to exist.

But it will.

Tonight, regardless of the result, we need to understand that this is only the beginning of the process.

For journalists: Don't confuse cries of 'post-truth' with the fact that journalism has not been attentive enough to the diversity of opinion out there.

We are in a world of plural, often emotionally-driven political narratives out there. But that does not mean they are false. Trump was not a weather-event. He was not random. Clinton and her machine messaging was all too familiar.

So we did not deal well with it. But we must learn, and so must the politicians and public. What do we all want?

- Copyright © 2014 London School of Economics and Political Science