

The World Makes a Sharp U-Turn:

Money and Politics 2016

PROTEST 2017

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2016 was a year of cataclysmic events, great instability and an Us Over Them-type of revanchist politics.

I don't know what happened in your personal life but on the macro level, this was a year in which the world made a sharp U-turn, rejecting the trends of the last 70 years and the entire post-World War II world order.

A global snapshot must necessarily leave out most of the world. But let's focus in on some of the massive car crashes caused by the U-turns enacted by politicians and millions and millions of voters. The value of money and progressive political trends are the most severely wounded victims.

Money

The power of money has been challenged but also reaffirmed. What is money after all? It is a symbolic form of wealth that we all believe in to allow us to exchange commodities. It has value because we all agree that it does.

But when India suddenly devalued almost 86% of its currency on 8 November when Prime Minister Modi declared that all 500 and 1,000 rupee denominations would no longer be valid as of midnight, we can suddenly see money for what it is, a rectangular piece of crumpled paper with pictures on it.

The Zimbabwe government is running out of these pieces of paper and so it is trying to issue [bond notes](#) in the stead of hard, cold, US dollars.

The IMF forced Egypt to float its currency instead of keeping it pegged to the US dollar. The Egyptian pound has devalued dramatically.

Demonetization, devaluation, flotation. Venezuela is facing severe inflation. How will these programs devolve?

On one hand, money is a fiction. But it is a fiction that overdetermines all our lives. Human society has chosen to link our fate to its capricious, arcane mechanisms.

Politics

More money was not enough to win Hillary Clinton the election. But Donald Trump's popularity was always built on his chimerical wealth. In other words, Clinton's campaign [outraised](#) Trump's. But yet, counter to conventional electoral logic, she still lost.

Hillary had actual money. Trump has benefitted from the appearance of great wealth. But we still don't actually know how much he is worth. Where are his tax returns after all?

However, whatever his wealth may or may not be, he has won the US election. Although nearly three million [more votes](#) were cast for Hillary, the archaic electoral college has delivered him a victory. Approximately 63 million Americans voted for him thus rejecting the type of multiculturalism, intellectualism, and progressive potential of Obamaism. They elected a man who represents a throwback to the dark moments of a too recent past: in which people of color, women, journalists, queer people had even fewer rights than they do today.

Clinton's defeat can be partly blamed on Obama's failure to realize the type of progressive agenda that Bernie Sanders advocated. But the racism, xenophobia, misogyny, anti-Semitism and reactionary return to white supremacy euphemistically termed white nationalism/alt-right is primarily to blame.

[Brexit](#) was Britain turning against immigrants who represent globalization. Like the Trump campaign of Make America Great Again, there was a great deal of nostalgia for a former era. Right-wing politicians are mobilizing their voters to "take back their countries." From what? Brown people? Indian food? Mexican and Polish immigrants? If the average voter thinks these same politicians will protect them from the ravages of global capitalism, they are sorely mistaken. Almost every politician, right or left, is in cahoots with Big Business and Big Money.

Bombings, gun killings, terrorist attacks, drone strikes. Instability and uncertainty in so many countries: Brazil impeached their president, Tunisia removed their prime minister, South Korea's streets were jam-packed with protesters demanding their president steps down, Colombia rejected a peace deal with FARC rebels but then still managed to see it through even as right-wing elements [seek to undermine](#) it, South Africa is witnessing increasing protests against the ruling party, Turkey's attempted coup has evoked a vicious crackdown on any suspected opposition, Nigeria is suffering from low oil prices and massive Boko Haram-related violence and displacement, Philippines has elected a volatile tyrant as its president, as controversy-prone as the Tangerine Bully.

The tragedy of Syria's bloody war has been recast as Europe's refugee crisis. When the history books are written, they will ask why the world stood by and did nothing AGAIN as millions of civilians are bombarded, displaced and disillusioned by the

world's apathy.

Even though the Far Right lost in Austria's elections, they are gaining ground in Germany, Italy and France.

But how successful the U-turn back to old-fashioned reactionary politics will be is still To Be Determined. That is why the only option for progressives, even for bourgeois Marxists like myself who would rather be getting a pedicure than marching in the streets, is to protest.

PROTEST

I am not a Muslim. I am not Jewish. But I am on the alert for anti-Semitism in all its forms right now including Islamophobia.

I am going to actively fight against xenophobia and racism and misogyny in all its forms. I am going to protest in any way I can: with how and where I spend my money - especially by supporting serious journalism; with my body when I am geographically close enough to participate in any peaceful street protest; with my mind as I try to educate myself on how to quell fear and counter tyranny.

Find a protest [here](#). Make your voice [heard](#).

I know that Donald Trump will lose in the end. He will be judged wanting by history for the kind of hatred and intolerance and ignorance he represents. When the history books are written, he will take his place alongside the world's most shameful, reviled dictators. If Nelson Mandela was a man who rose above humankind's basest instincts, Trump is the man who relishes them, revels in them and wants to make them rain down on the rest of us.

The world took a U-turn in 2016 but in the long-term, human history is ever so slowly moving towards more rights for more people. Slavery was accepted as normal in Ancient Rome as was crucifixion as a form of punishment. Humans still find multiple ways to harm each other today. But with every century that goes by, we are trying to move forwards towards more peace, equity, harmony, and justice for all. Aren't we?

You should take a decision before you start driving. Then please, head in the right direction.

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