

Explaining Trump: Disruptions in the World Economy will Extend Beyond his Candidacy

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Introduction

Many explanations have been offered for the stunning rise of Donald Trump to become the Republican Presidential candidate in 2016. Those outside the US tend to see it as affirmation of the uncouth and uncivilised aspects of American society, in juxtaposition, of course, to their own citizenry. Trump's statements about Mexicans being rapists; banning Muslims; and that he would know better than intelligence officials about how to defeat ISIL all seem to grate against common decency and have provoked such a reaction both abroad and at home. Yet, during his rise, Trump was filling stadiums of well-wishers, a fact that seemed to defy the best media analysts, who can only ascribe it to anger, xenophobia/racism, and disgust with the political gridlock and rigged campaign finance systems in the US. The media continually point to white working class workers who found a champion in a New York billionaire who won't reveal his taxes, without explaining the appeal or the timing. To claim Trump's appeal as an outsider of the political system may have some merit, but it really stretches credibility once voters knew more about the candidate. We need a more systematic approach to really understand such events. The key is to match actual data to the timing of the rise of Trump.

In this brief, I suggest that there are long-term, structural reasons behind Trump's rise related to economic challenges to all of the world, not just the U.S. The pattern of extremist politics, from the Brexit vote to the rise of far right parties in Europe precedes the migration crisis and the rise of ISIL. Such events may have stoked the fires of fear (see my book on human irrationality and politics), but the wood fuel was already in place. Similarly, the discourse about inequality as reflected in the Sanders campaign and surprising everyone, can be traced, in good part, to the same roots. Consider that one of the leading contenders to be the next President of France, Emmanuel Macron, has started his own movement, *En Marche!* that promises a new form of politics, and that Jeremy Corbyn, former and contending leader of the Labour Party in the UK, is, like Sanders, a self-avowed Socialist. They seek to confront the anti-immigrant Front National and UKIP (UK Independence Party) that have shown rising strength over the past decade. So, despite media coverage, the Trump phenomenon is far from isolated. Until we more directly confront these challenges to the future of Western economies, we will simply be treating the symptoms.

Who Backs Trump?

Trump's coalition has defied political boundaries but has been well-documented throughout the campaign, so we won't spend too much time on it here. His supporters tend to be white males with just a high school education or less. He has more support in the South. These

voters undoubtedly make up a large part of the Fox News viewership, and the consistent messages of America under siege and America failing since Obama took office have laid the groundwork. But Trump's ability to stay in the media as well as the proliferation of internet sites have also reduced the overall level of discourse in the campaign. In an increasingly competitive media landscape, sensationalism is all too appealing for media outlets, and Trump rode heavily on such throughout the primary campaign. His not so subtle messages appealed to a sense among large parts of the US population that the country was inevitably changing, as reflected in the demographics of increasing minorities. Throw in the fear about terrorism, and concern about change helps to explain a strong reactionary turn. All of this has been discussed, so we won't spend much time on it here.

In terms of policy, Trump is a Republican in the sense of the traditional values of fiscal conservatism, smaller government, and seeing the private sector as an engine of growth. However, his isolationism reflected in his anti-trade and anti-immigrant stance as well as pulling the US back from foreign commitments represents a minority slice of the Party, though it has been seen before as with former candidate Pat Buchanan. His more moderate social values to accept same sex marriage and on abortion (though showing some inconsistency on this), as reflected by Cruz's charge that he has "New York" values has not damaged his reputation with Republican mainstay evangelical voters, though Mormons seem hesitant. Perhaps it is the highly nationalistic themes of his campaign to "Make America Great Again" that appears to suggest turning back all of the revolutions in gender, race, and sex equality over the past 4 decades which threaten conservative voters.

A Rand study of supporters of Trump during the primary season (<http://www.rand.org/blog/2016/01/rand-kicks-off-2016-presidential-election-panel-survey.html>) found some more interesting nuances to this well-known picture. Trump's derision of politics as usual as a "rigged game" seemed to decisively separate him from the rest of the candidates. This worked with his campaign and convention rhetoric that he was "speaking for the voiceless." About half of his primary supporters viewed unions favourably, unusual for Republicans. This makes everything seem like a blue vs. red state, white vs. cosmopolitan, coast vs. inland, blue collar vs. white collar, etc. conflict. A paper by Gallup economist Jonathan Rothwell in Aug. 2016 (http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2822059) suggests however, that the picture is not so simple. His supporters are mostly less educated and more likely to be blue collar workers, but they have relatively high incomes (median income of \$58,000 among supporters), reflecting the fact that the wealthy also support him. Exposure to trade or immigration by region does not seem to increase levels of support. So let us dig a bit deeper to better understand the real roots of the conflict and explain its timing. What I aim to show is that the issue is much bigger than has been depicted.

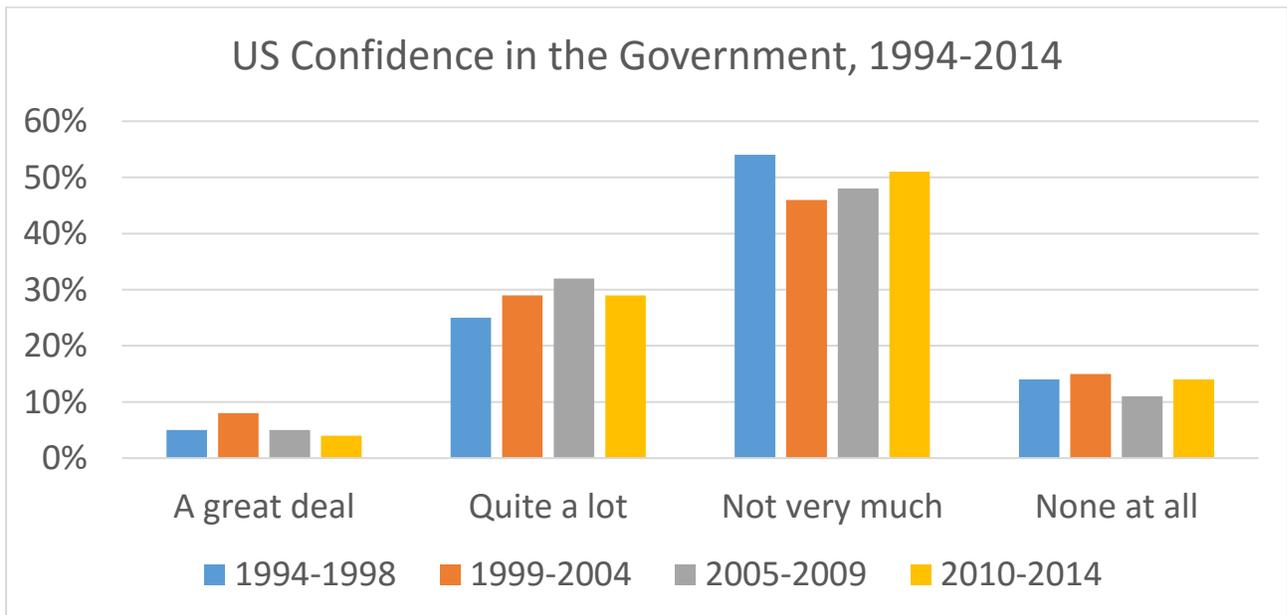
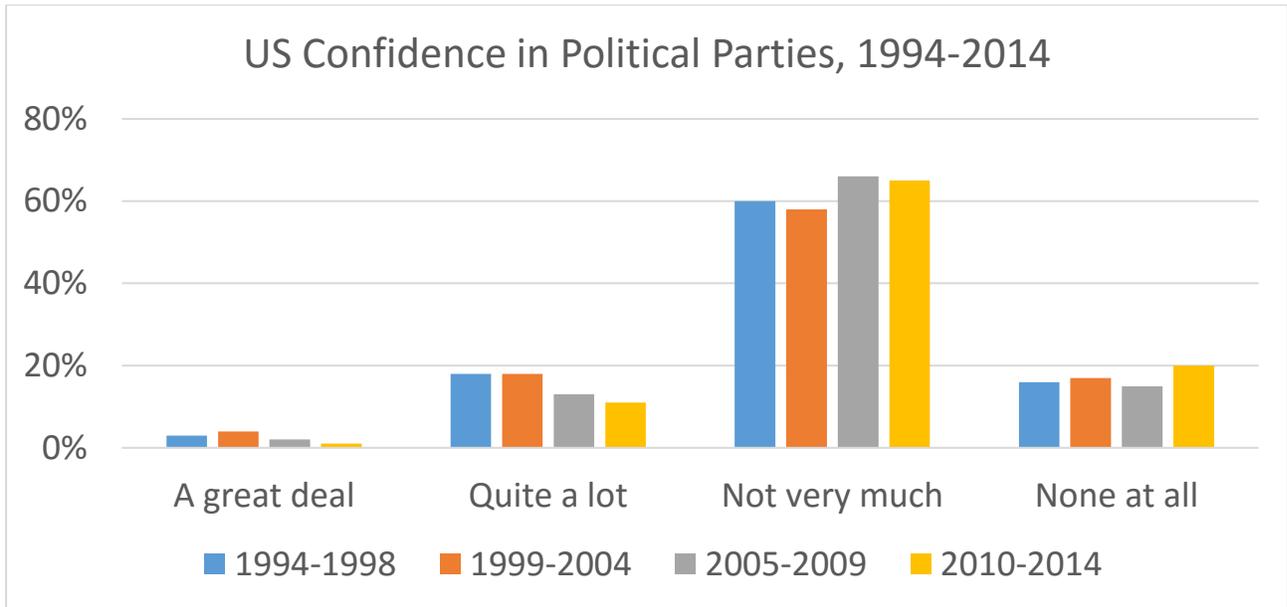
Dispensing with Limited Explanations

Disgust with Politics as Usual

The first explanation we often hear is that political gridlock and corruption through campaign finance led to voters choosing Trump. While not at all diminishing the importance of

such issues, the data suggest that we should be cautious. For such an explanation to hold water, we should see a major shift in dissonance before this campaign. This would be plausible given the inability of the Obama Administration or the Republican Congress to pass any major legislation.

The following figures put such explanations into doubt.



Source: Author from World Values Survey

Unfortunately, there are no long-run surveys that ask the same question over time, however our series is long enough to show that there really is not any significant change in attitudes towards government from the 1990s (the boom of the Clinton Administration) until 2014. Lest someone conclude that the cynicism reflected above is unique to the US, parallel surveys in other countries, e.g., Australia, show similar scepticism consistent over time. In short, while disgust with politicians' inefficacy, corruption, and lack of conviction appears to be acute, it is really nothing new.

Xenophobia/Racism

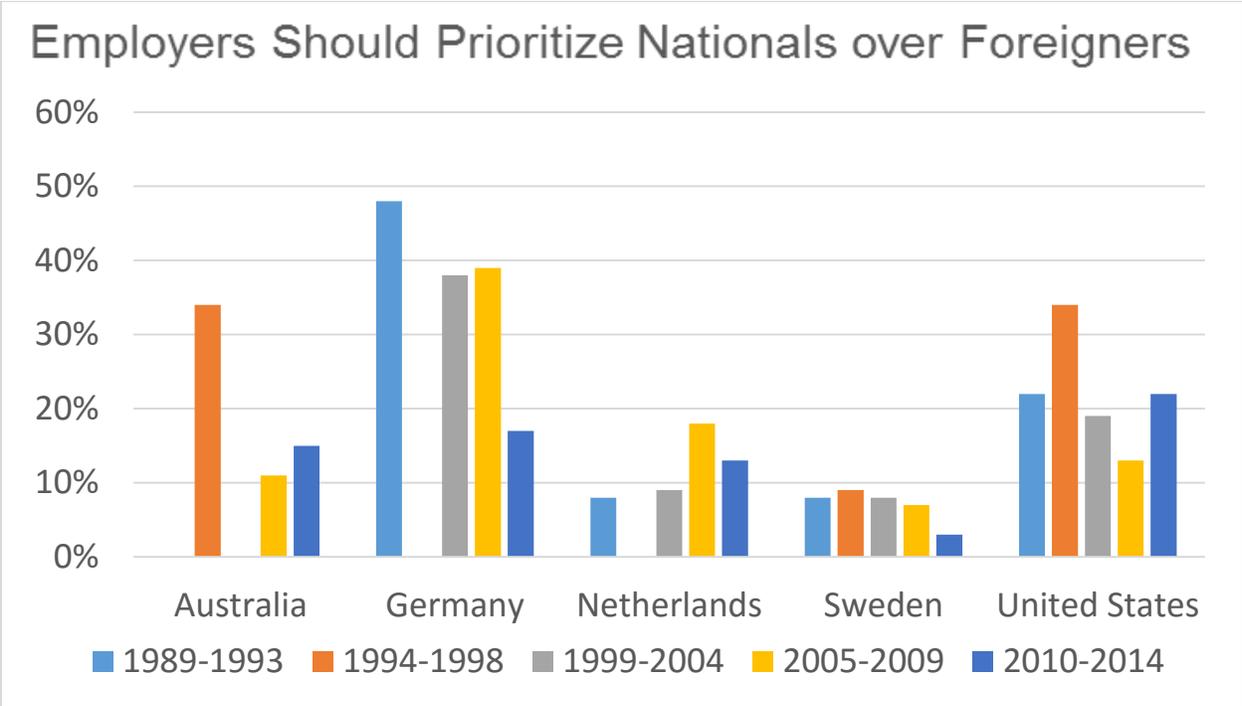
There is no question that concerns over terrorism have increased significantly in the West, and particularly in the US, after 9/11, after all that was the first major strike on US soil by outside forces. While Europeans have more of a history of such attacks, there is no doubt that the frequency of the attacks has vastly increased, and along with it, fear leading to susceptibility to those offering easy solutions. In combination with the Syrian migrant crisis, it would seem easy to tie Trump's anti-immigrant messages to those of the Front National in France, the UKIP in the UK and the Brexit vote, and a host of other developments on the Continent.

The irrational roots of such politics become plain once we look at the proposals offered. First, it bears pointing out that net migration from Mexico to the US was close to 0 over the last few years. Second, according to Argueta's Congressional Research Service report (2016), over \$4 billion was spent in FY 2015 on border patrols alone, not including at least \$7 billion for other border security activities. According to a Kim's (2015) estimate, Trump's proposals would cost at least \$166 billion, including an estimated \$5.1 billion for constructing a wall with Mexico. This does not consider maintenance. Third, a wall would be entirely impractical to stop the flow of immigrants. There are already thousands of agents, motion detectors, aerial reconnaissance, physical barriers, and a multitude of other detection instruments along the border.

Consider that in 2014 alone from Mexico to the US, there were a reported 5.4 million truck, 910,000 railway containers, 69.6 million vehicles with 129.2 million passengers, another 2.7 million passengers by bus and 41.2 million by foot (Author from: <http://nats.sct.gob.mx>). Therefore, to claim that one can either create a large wall without major expense or impediments to trade or traffic is simply not truthful. The fact is that many industries in North America, including the auto industry are now effectively vertically integrated across the border, with Mexico generally providing the cheap labour component to US manufacturers. Up to now, this has helped them to compete with Asian competitors who have cheaper labour. What becomes apparent, upon looking beneath the surface, is that there are strong US business interests in using illegal immigrants. They are crucial to many industries, such as construction and food processing. This explains why the much cheaper and simple fixes of verifying citizenship or residency status upon hiring, educational enrolment, or health care, are resisted.

While there is a heightened state of anxiety, we should be careful in our diagnosis of its roots. If it really is coming from bigotry, that would suggest that the progress made in civil rights over the last 5 decades from racial to gender to sexual equality is being reversed. That

would fly in the face with recent accomplishments, such as equal pay for equal work by gender, the acceptance of minority/female political leaders, and the acceptance of same sex marriage. The following figure shows that there are reasons to doubt such reversals, at least among the general population:

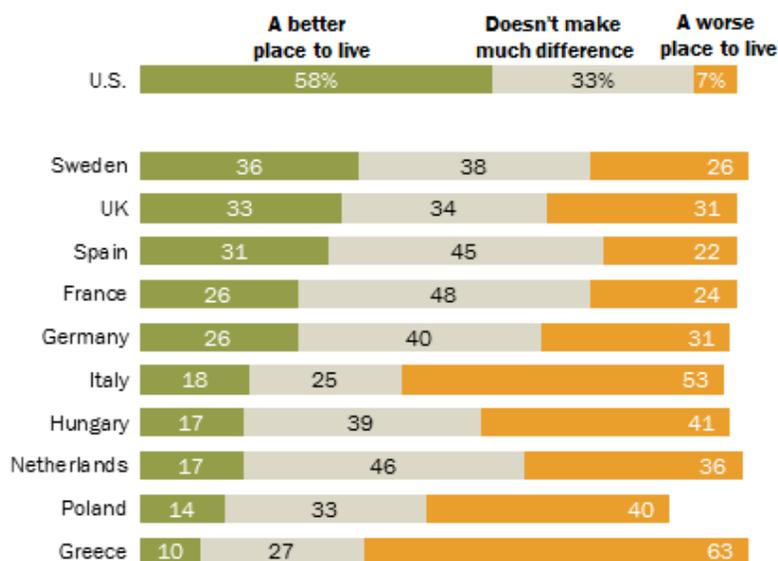


Source: Author from World Values Survey; UK n/a

While in some countries, such as the US, there has been a recent spike, we don't see evidence for an increase in xenophobia. In fact, there is rather evidence that there is a general value shift, which one would expect as the millennial generation grows up with different socialization, as we see in the following graph from Pew.

Americans more likely to say growing diversity makes their country a better place to live

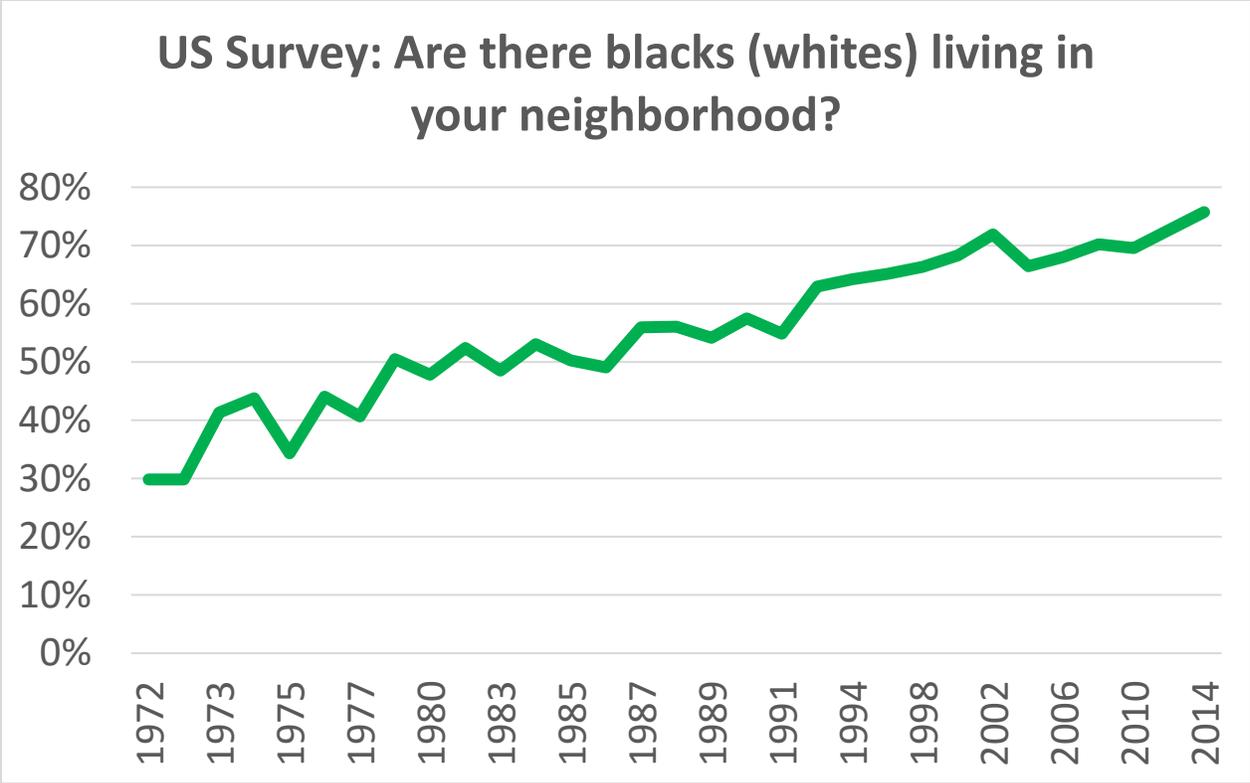
Do you think having an increasing number of people of many different races, ethnic groups and nationalities in our country makes it a better place to live, a worse place to live or doesn't make much difference either way?



Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. U.S. survey conducted March 17-27, 2016.

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Moreover, there is clear visual evidence of increasing diversity in the highest occupations, from Presidential candidates and Prime Ministers to CEOs, albeit not at a satisfactory pace to some, that Western societies are becoming more diverse, or “mixed up” as I put it, in terms of the blurring of previous categories as intermarriage proceeds. The following question asked whites (or African Americans) if there was someone of the opposite race living in their neighbourhood. It is one of the few instances of useful long-term data and reveals a very important trend towards diversity.



Source: Author from General Social Survey

Of course, we should not be too sanguine about the need to continue to fight for equal treatment. Women continue to be underpaid for comparable work. The shootings of several African-Americans and reports of police brutality overt the past year in the US make that all too clear. Attitudes likely change more quickly than systemic bias. If we dig a little deeper, we also see that there are certain segments of the population who hold different attitudes. We know that some pockets of the South, for example, are rife with discrimination. The following chart by Pew shows how much of a difference education makes in changing such attitudes:

More-educated say increasing diversity makes their country a better place

An increasing number of people of many different races, ethnic groups and nationalities in our country makes this country a better place to live

	Secondary education or less	More than secondary education	Diff
	%	%	
UK	26	50	+24
Sweden	28	51	+23
Spain	26	45	+19
U.S.	48	64	+16
France	23	35	+12
Germany	18	30	+12

Note: Only statistically significant differences shown.

Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey. U.S. survey conducted March 17-27, 2016.

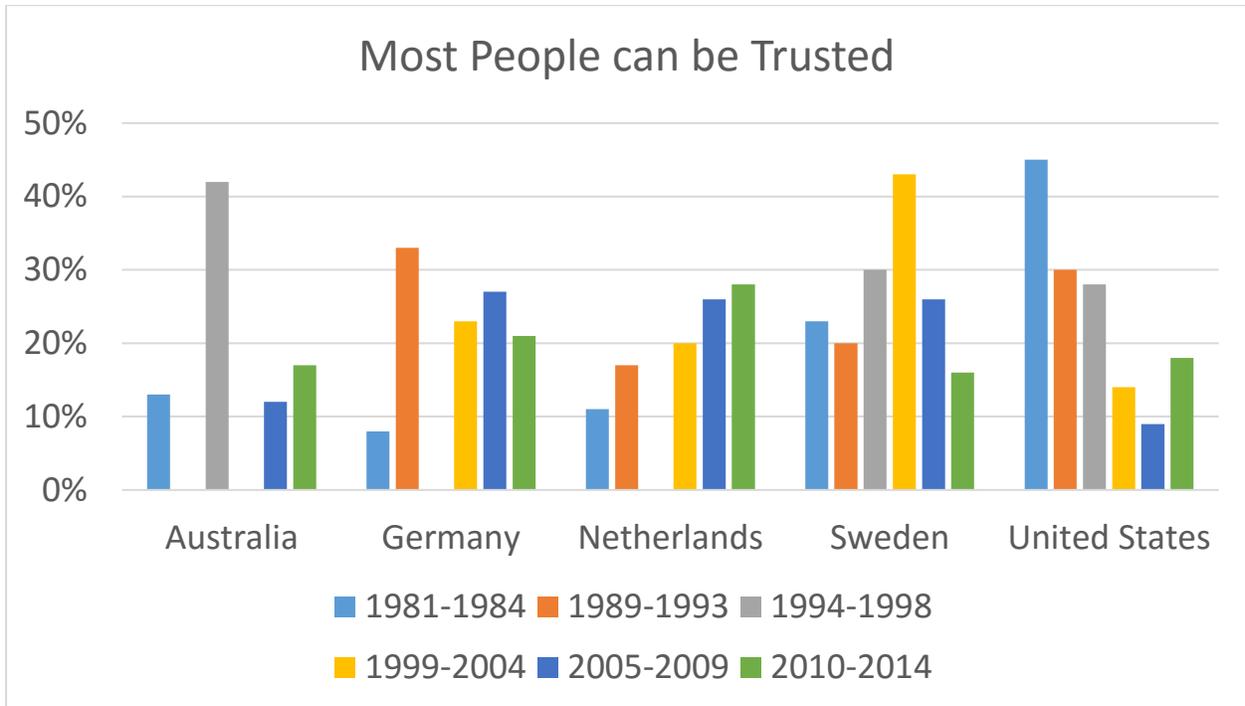
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Having dispensed with the limited explanations all too glibly offered in the media of political gridlock and racism, let us see if we can more squarely identify the problem.

Are Americans Unhappy?

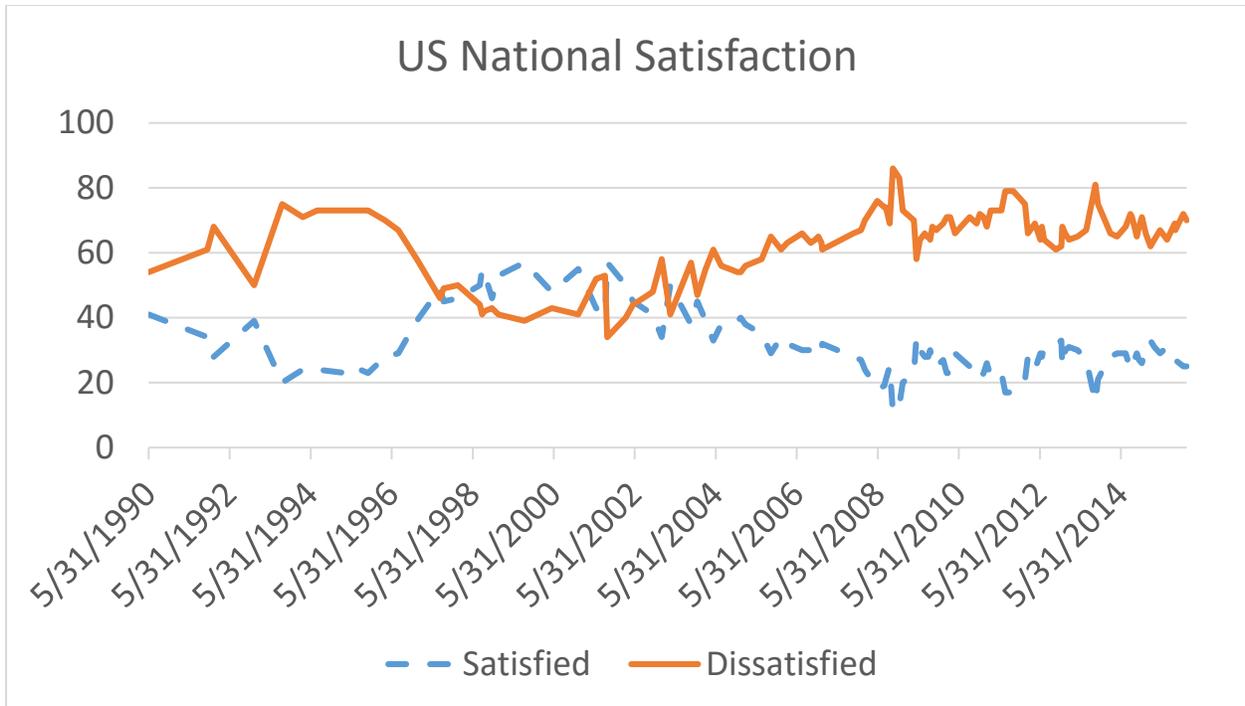
We should start with examining whether there are intrinsic magnetic qualities of Trump rather than any deep dissatisfaction that explain his followers. Undoubtedly, he is a world class entertainer and has unmatched instincts for one liners that the audience finds mesmerizing. The media simply can not get enough of Trump because the audience finds him so entertaining. But that would be another limited explanation, particularly given his steep decline in support after the two party conventions. Presumably, an entertainment-based leader would have used the convention stage to push his popularity even farther up. Trump now blames the media who helped to make him a credible candidate. If entertainment moved politics, we would have many more running for office. Entertainers such as George Clooney are politically active, but not politicians, with rare exceptions, such as Sonny Bono. Even in those cases, such as Reagan, they tend to work through the political process in decidedly more conventional ways. There must be something Trump is tapping into that deserves more attention.

The following graph shows that there is reason to believe that there is a widespread undercurrent of discontent in the West. Many current political science theories of institutions point to trust as the underlying glue that allows institutions, including political ones, to function well. In most countries, we see a decline in trust.



Author from WVS

In the US, we can clearly see a rise in dissatisfaction has taken hold since George W. Bush came to power in 2000.

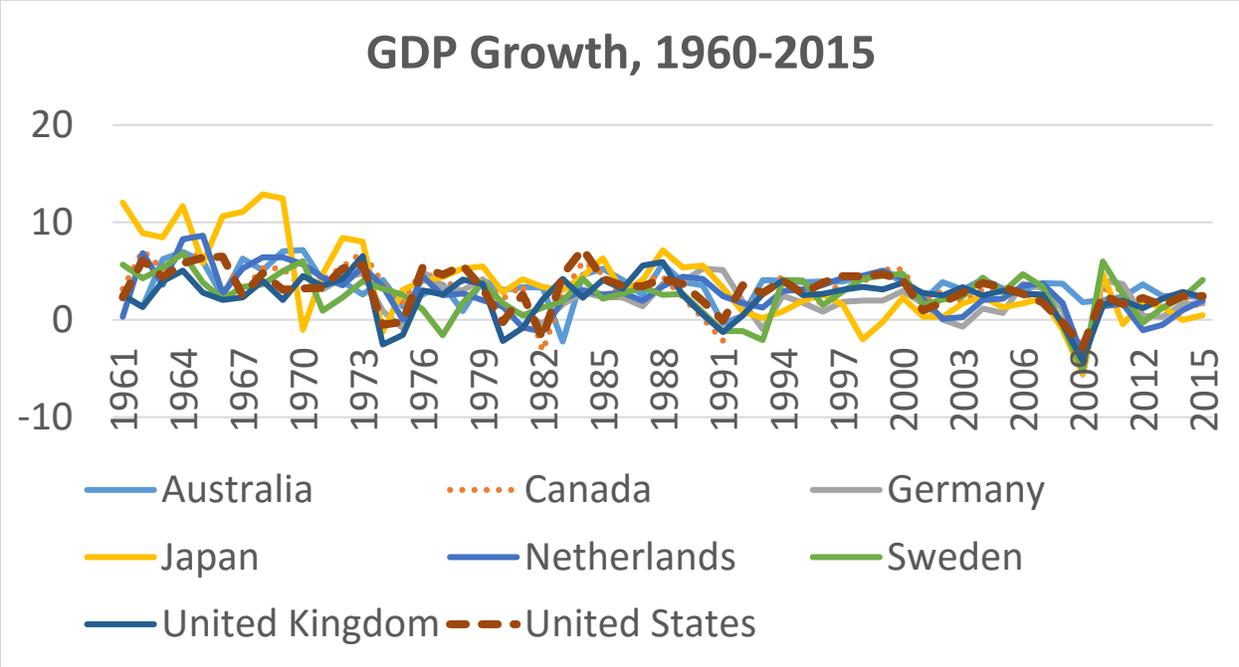


Author from Pew Research

If there is a growing dissatisfaction among a significant portion of the population and severe issues with white working class males, what is the source? We have examined politics and migration and found them to be rather limited. The obvious place to look is at people's pocketbooks.

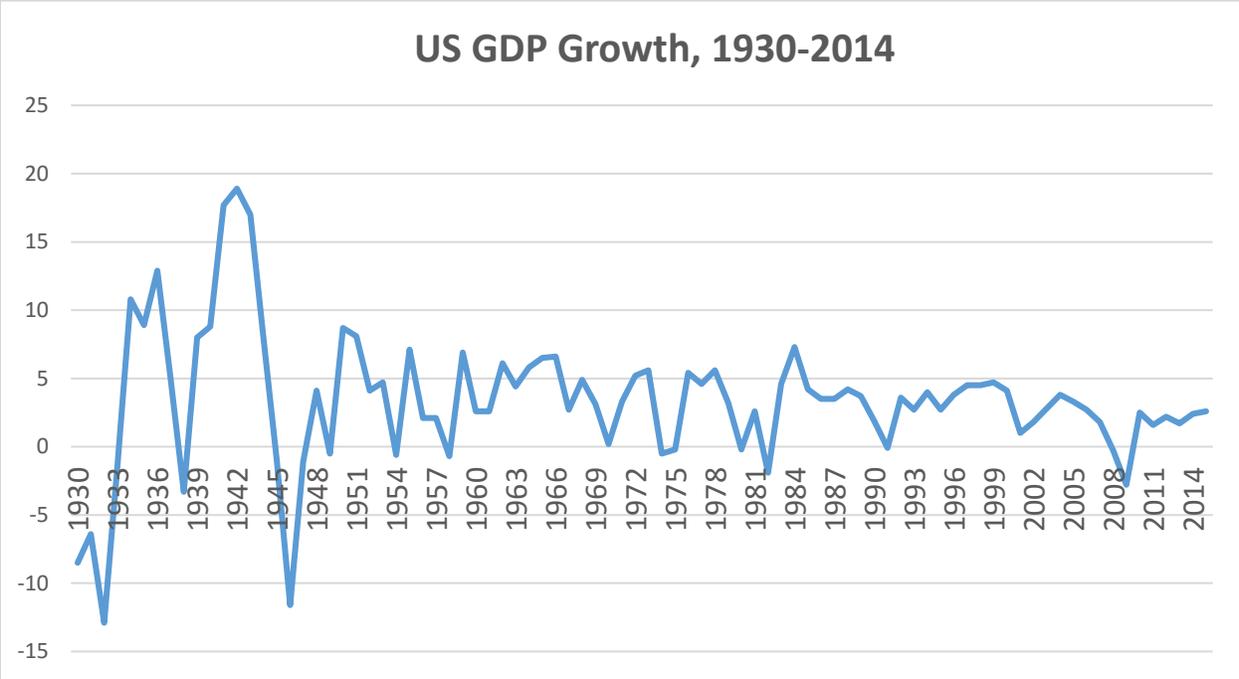
General Economic Deterioration

Let us examine economic indicators to see if we can find the source of the problem. The obvious explanation is that the 2008 global recession knocked the West back, but that was 8 years ago! Since then, economies, and the US in particular, seem to be recovering at a steady pace. The following graphs shows that while the recession was deeper, it was not atypical of a pattern seen over the last 5 decades of the business cycle, and that growth has recovered.



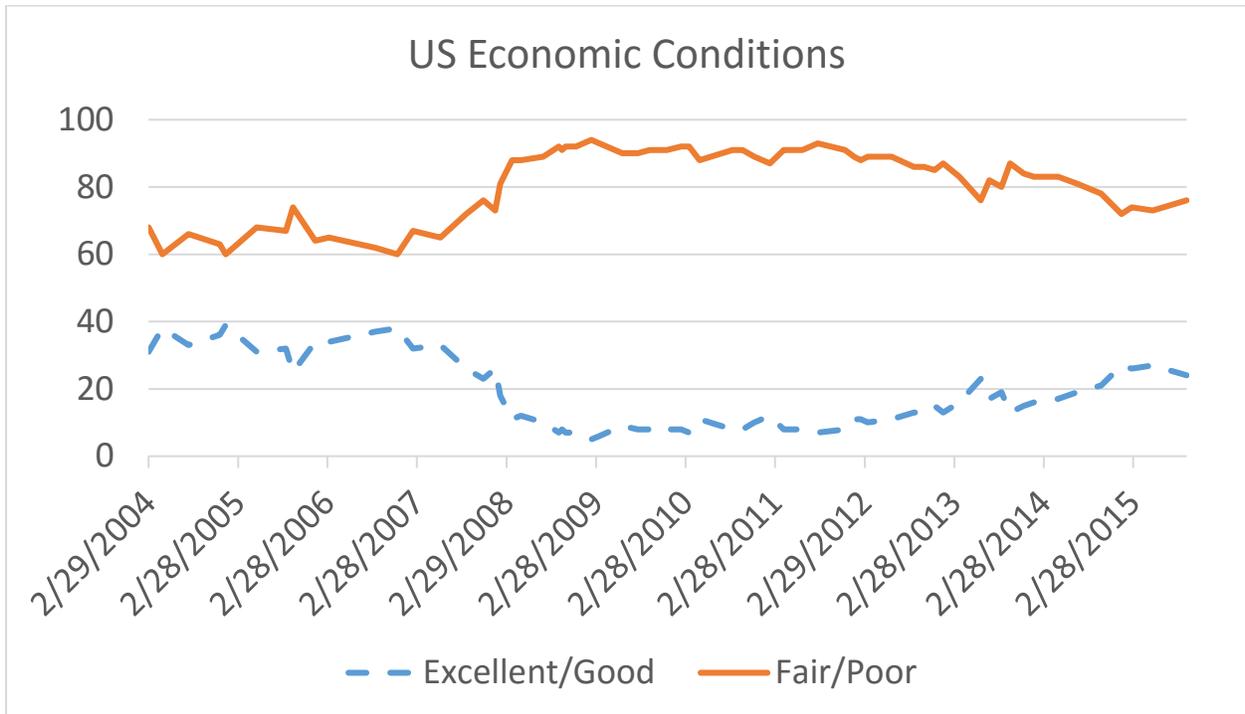
Source: Author from World Bank

The patterns can be seen as typical by taking an even longer look at the economic cycles from the 1930s on. It is no wonder that the Obama Administration is befuddled at the lack of recognition of the recovery!



Source: Author from BEA

Indicators, then, show that the economy is following a normal course correction, not much different from the early 1980s, yet we are seeing political revolt. The following graph shows that perceptions don't match the economic indicators of recovery.



Author from Pew

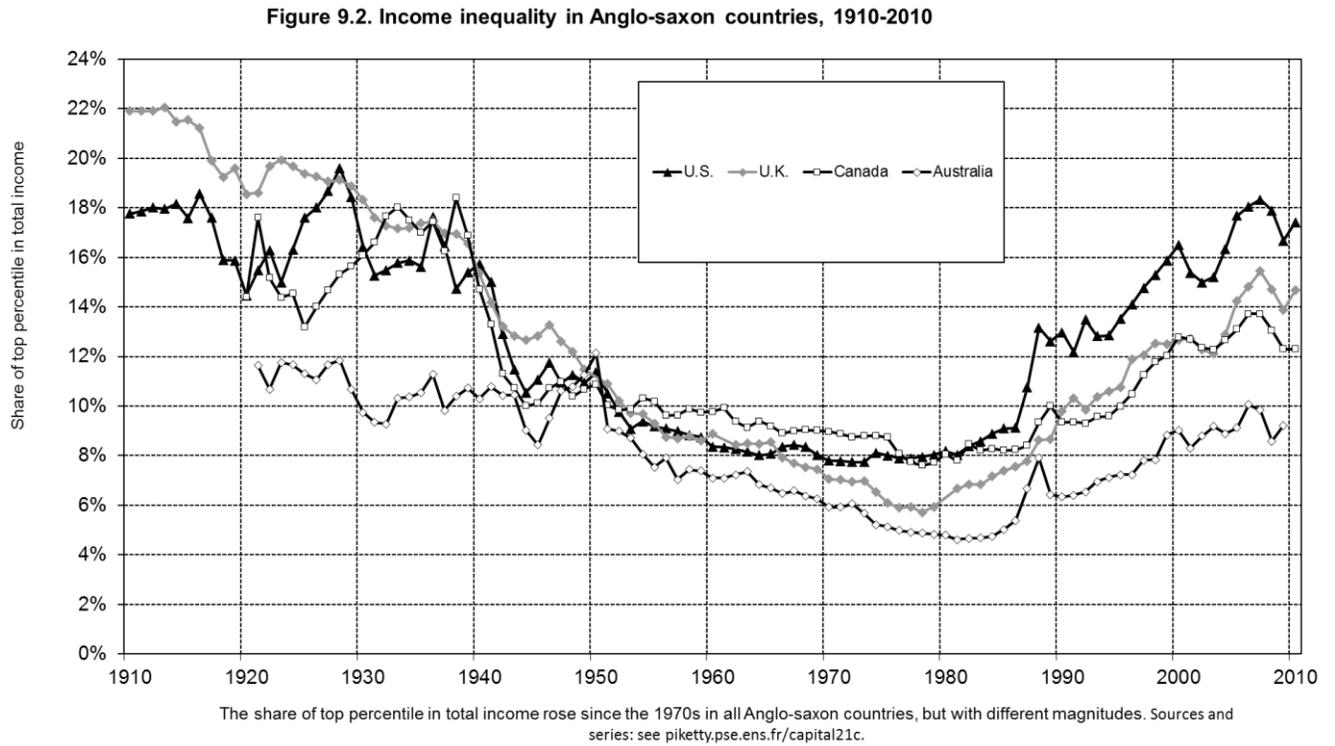
Why, if recovery has taken place according to all economic indicators, is dissatisfaction so deep as to support a demagogic candidate who promises to make the country “great again”? The main substantive argument we have, and one that reflects the Sanders’ campaign theme, is inequality.

Picketty’s Revelations about Growing Inequality

Thomas Picketty’s important work based on the creation of the first long-term global historical database on inequality provides the likely primary source of economic frustration amidst seemingly recovering economies. The fact is that economists have no good theories for inequality, and thus they have largely ignored it. They focus on efficiency, missing the obvious facts that not everyone gains the same from every transaction.

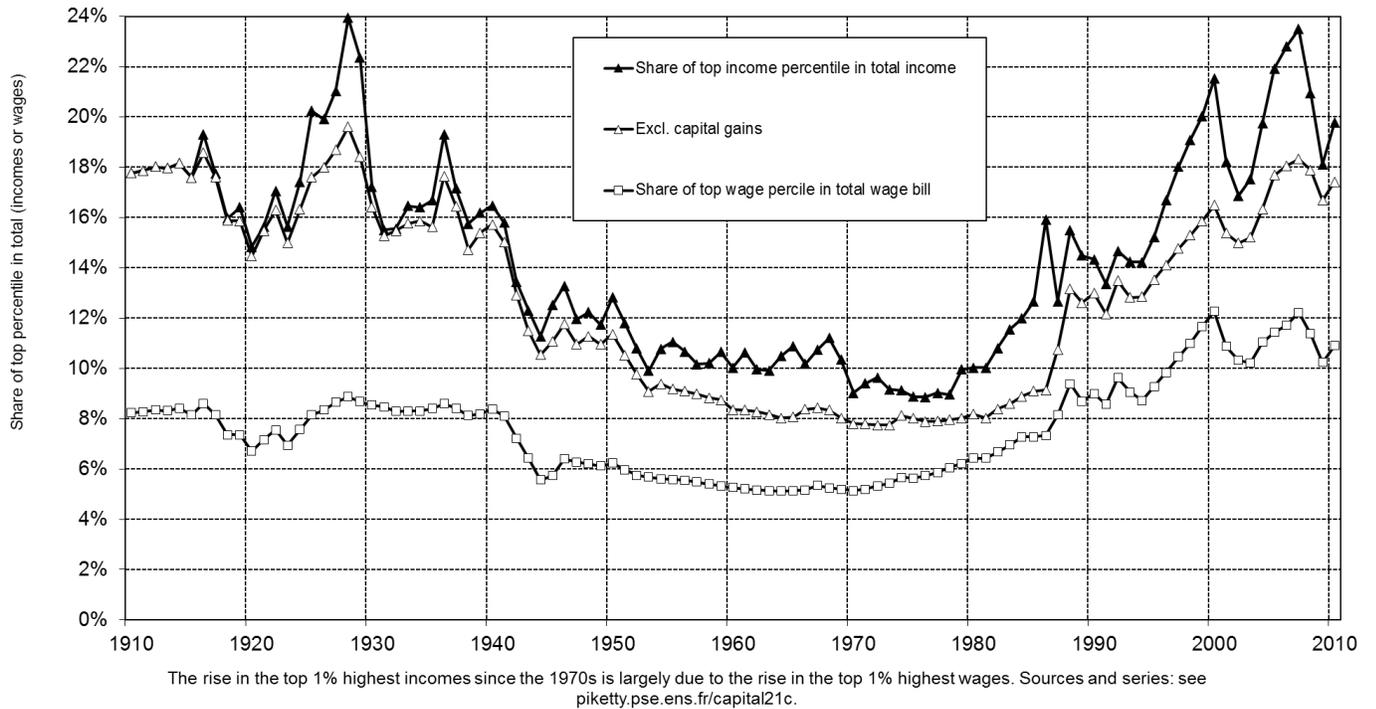
Sanders’ candidacy came out of nowhere- an independent socialist in Vermont was even more unlikely than Trump to catch fire, yet he showed the inequality is a key concern. This issue was much discussed in the campaign, and forms the overlap between Trump’s and Sander’s messages. Trump says that he speaks to the “uneducated,” “for you,” reflecting the populist tone of his campaign and rallies. The very idea of making “America great again,” frequently misinterpreted abroad and at times by the media as a hyper-nationalism, speaks instead to a sense of economic security and fairness that is lost. While Trump offers to create thousands of great jobs, Sanders offers to provide a secure safety net, including free tuition, and universal health care.

Picketty's Figure 9.2 shows that inequality has risen considerably in every country but Australia, but primarily after a steep decline post-World War II.



Sanders' refrain about the 1%, coming from the Occupy movement, seems to follow the same pattern as seen in Picketty's Fig. 8.8.

Figure 8.8. The transformation of the top 1% in the United States



The top 1% discourse has gained more traction as time as gone on. There is no doubt that the financial system is dysfunctional as I discuss in my book using it as a case study of human irrationality. Sanders, Elizabeth Warren, and others have made careers out of attacking Wall Street, and even Trump has tapped into the “game is rigged” refrain. Sanders’ momentum came in good part from H. Clinton’s ties to Wall Street. But aside from offering a safety net, Sanders and Warren have no answers for how to reduce inequality. If progressive taxation is one redistributive salve, then it is a highly limited one in terms of popular support. More importantly, historically speaking, in the absence of acute crisis, revolution does not occur. The middle class emulates and desires the lifestyles of the rich class, as seen movies like *The Wolf of Wall Street*, *Limitless*, and the celebrity culture. The middle class wants jobs, not pitchforks. Trump offers economic growth, and particularly jobs, but no path forward. His economic speech in Detroit suggesting lowering taxes was astonishingly vacuous on the job creation issue. To find that inequality exists is one matter, but to really begin to tackle it, we need to have a better idea of its root causes.

Digging Deeper on Inequality

To dig deeper on the sources of inequality would require considerably more effort, but we can make a start here. Let us start with the most obvious place- unemployment. We can link unemployment directly to the mood of anger and despair across the West.

Spike in Suicide Rates in the US

There is now acceptance for a growing branch of health studies called “socioeconomic determinants of health.” This school of thought suggests that economic factors, particularly inequality, have real consequences on long-term health outcomes, including how long someone lives and their quality of life, beyond basic access to health care.

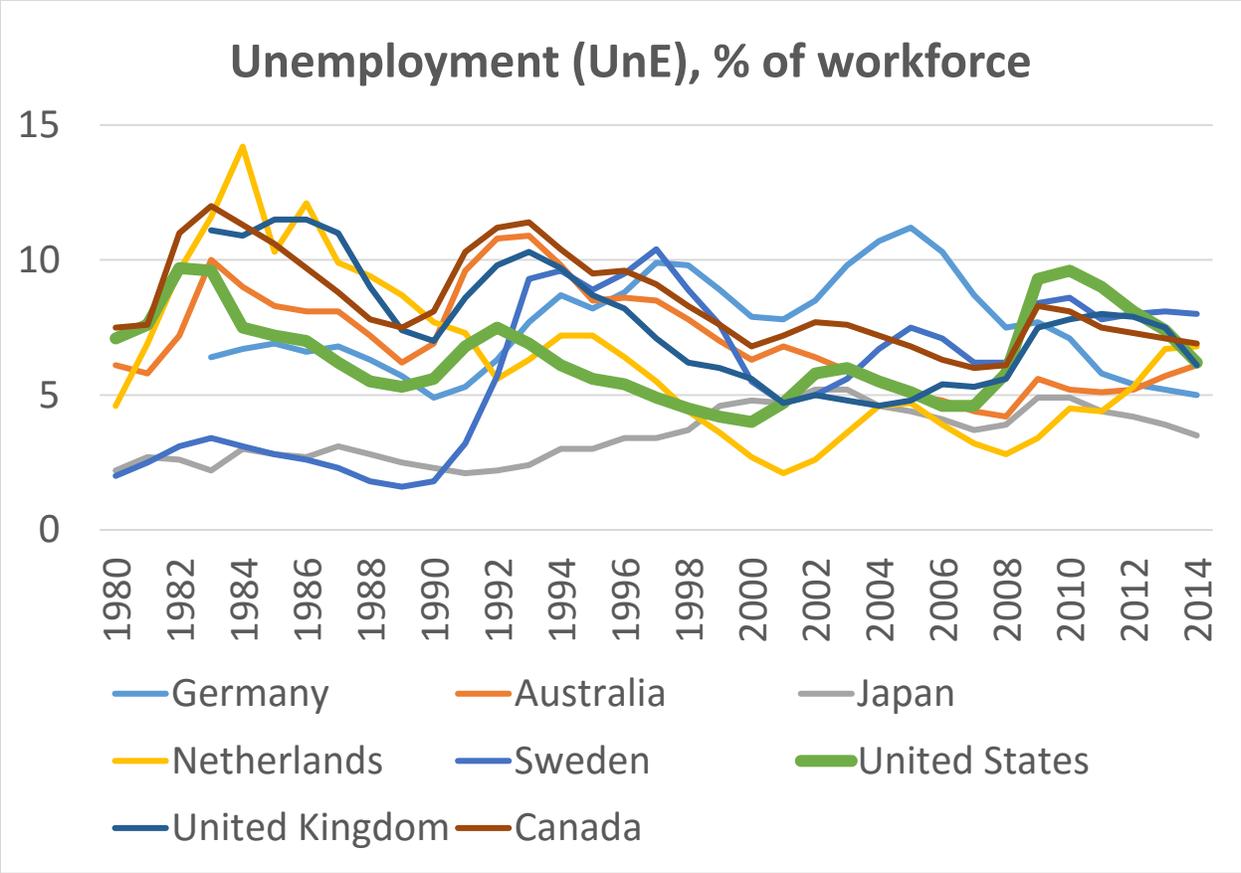
In April 2016, the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) in the US revealed some stunning news: the suicide rate in the US increased for the first time in 3 decades from 1999-2014 by 24%, to 13/100,000 people, the highest rate since 1986. The rate increased 43% among white men 45-64 and 63% for women of the same age. Meanwhile, it declined for black men and those over the age of 75 (<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db241.htm>). In a 2014 study, Phillips and Nugent found that unemployment and suicide were linked in the US for males in middle age groups, and that suicide rates tended to be lower in states where there were significant manufacturing jobs. Pellegrini and Rodriguez-Monguio (2013) found a link among unemployment, mental illness, and suicide for white non-Hispanics in the US between 16-64, particularly pronounced among males. There are, of course, many other factors at play, from individual backgrounds to access to mental health facilities. One particularly important recent factor is the growth in opiate use in the US in the last few years.

Nonetheless, there is growing evidence that unemployment and suicide are linked across borders. A study of suicide rates in Sweden in 2010 found that unemployment was a significant factor in explaining rates (Hiswåls, et. al, 2014). Another study by Aaron Reeves et. al (2015) found that suicides increased in 20 European countries after the 2007-11 recession, were concentrated in men, and “jobs losses were are critical determinant.” Breuer (2014), in examining 275 European regions from 1999-2010, found a rough correspondence of 1% increases in unemployment leading to 1% increases in suicide among men younger than 65. He found, by contrast, that the level of anti-depressants, costs of housing, unemployment benefits, and general levels of social protection did not have any clear effects. Coincidentally, a study by Piérard and Goortendorst (2014) found the same 1% to 1% relationship between unemployment or GDP and increases in suicides among Canadian males between 38-52. A study of suicide rates among South Koreans after the 2008 recession found links between rates and unemployment, and the authors note that it is likely not unemployment but “job insecurity” or downsizing after a recession that leads to the increases (Chan et. al 2014). It is notable, furthermore, that suicide rates in China decreased significantly after it opened its economy and began its spectacular growth phase from the 1990s. Much more work is needed to explore the causal connections, but there appears to be significant evidence for us to conclude that protracted unemployment among middle-aged males can be deadly.

Unemployment is Concentrated in Certain Segments of the Population

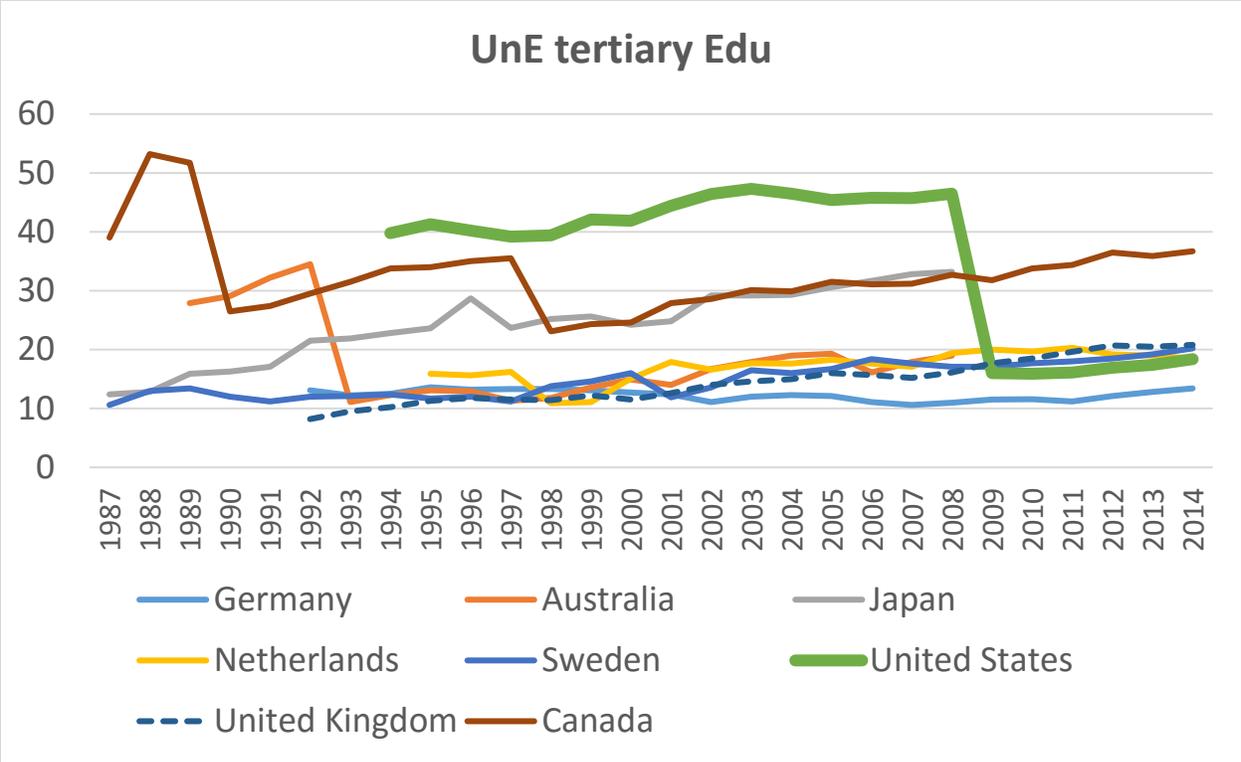
There has been some dispute about unemployment statistics and whether they are truly capturing those who have not re-entered the workforce since after the recovery, but they still provide a good starting place to examine whether inequality has led to long-term unemployment.

As seen in the following graph, unemployment certainly spiked after 2008, but it has recovered. Moreover, repeating a theme of this paper, it is not any higher than in previous business cycles.



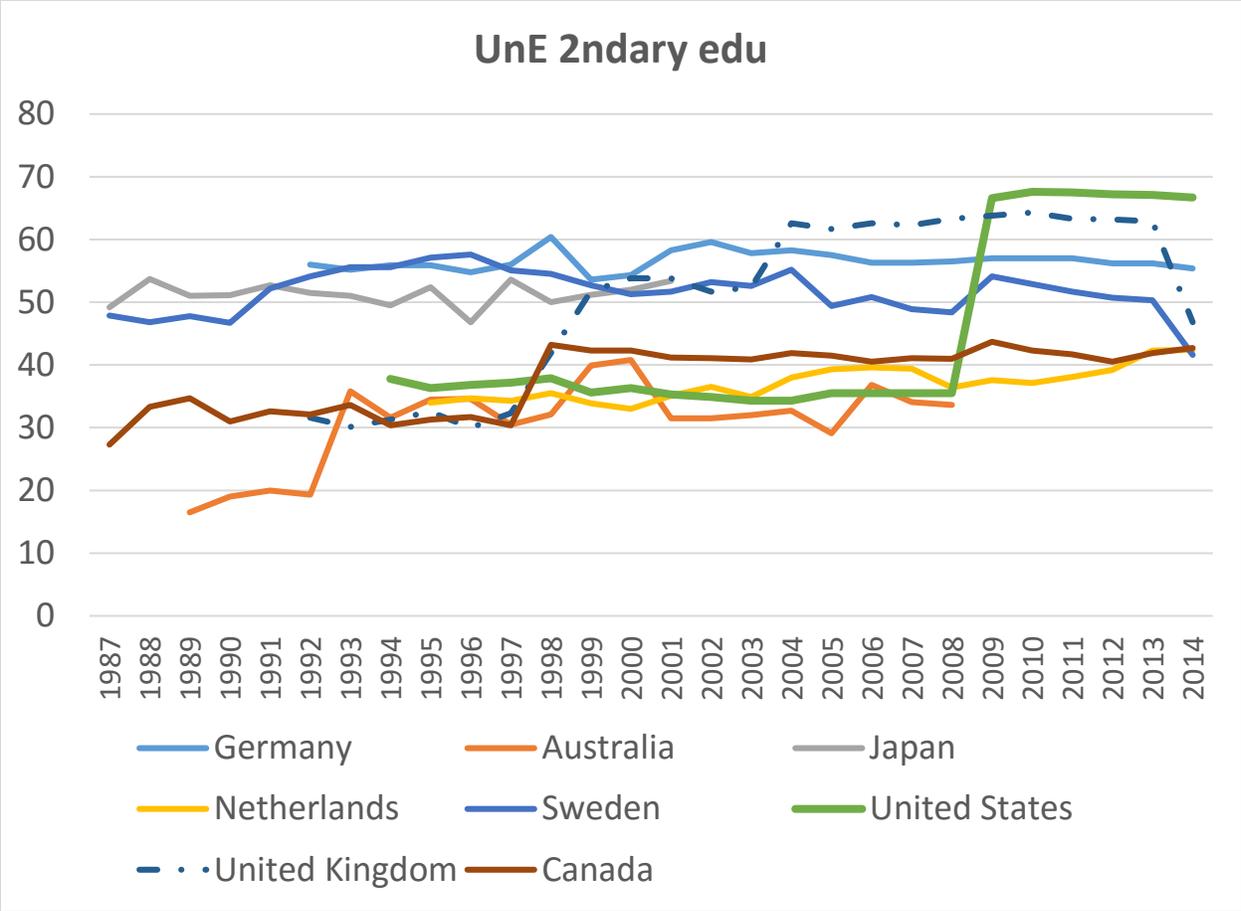
Source: Author from World Bank

It is even more striking if we begin to unpack long-run unemployment figures. The following graph shows how well those with college educations recovered:



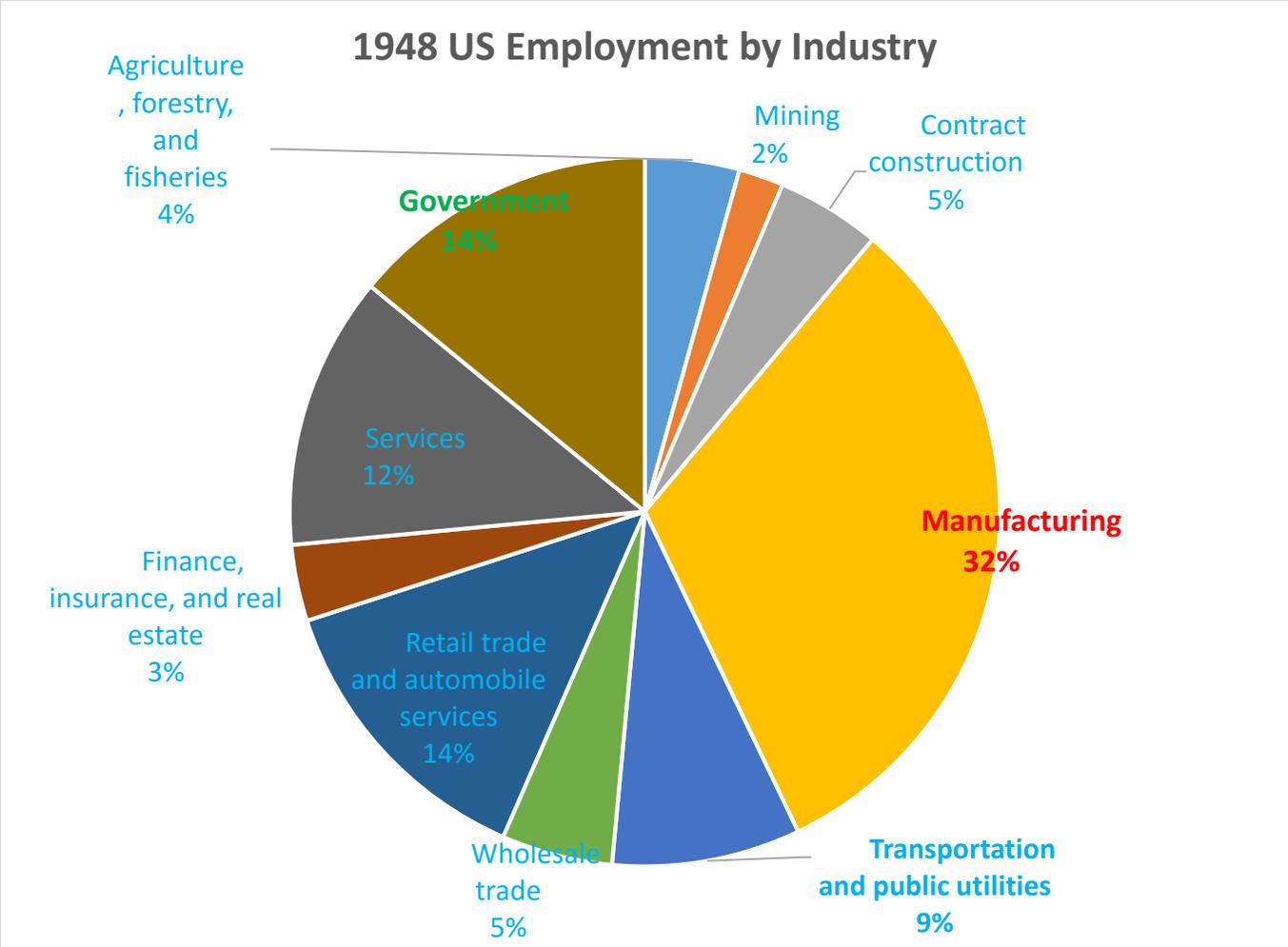
Author from World Bank

When we examine employment among those with only a primary (elementary) education, we don't see much change. They occupy low level service jobs, such as cleaners and gardeners, who are unlikely to be affected by changes in economic conditions. Where it becomes more interesting is in the following figure when we examine unemployment of those with a secondary (high school) education. In this case, we see sharp rises in both the US and the UK in unemployment.



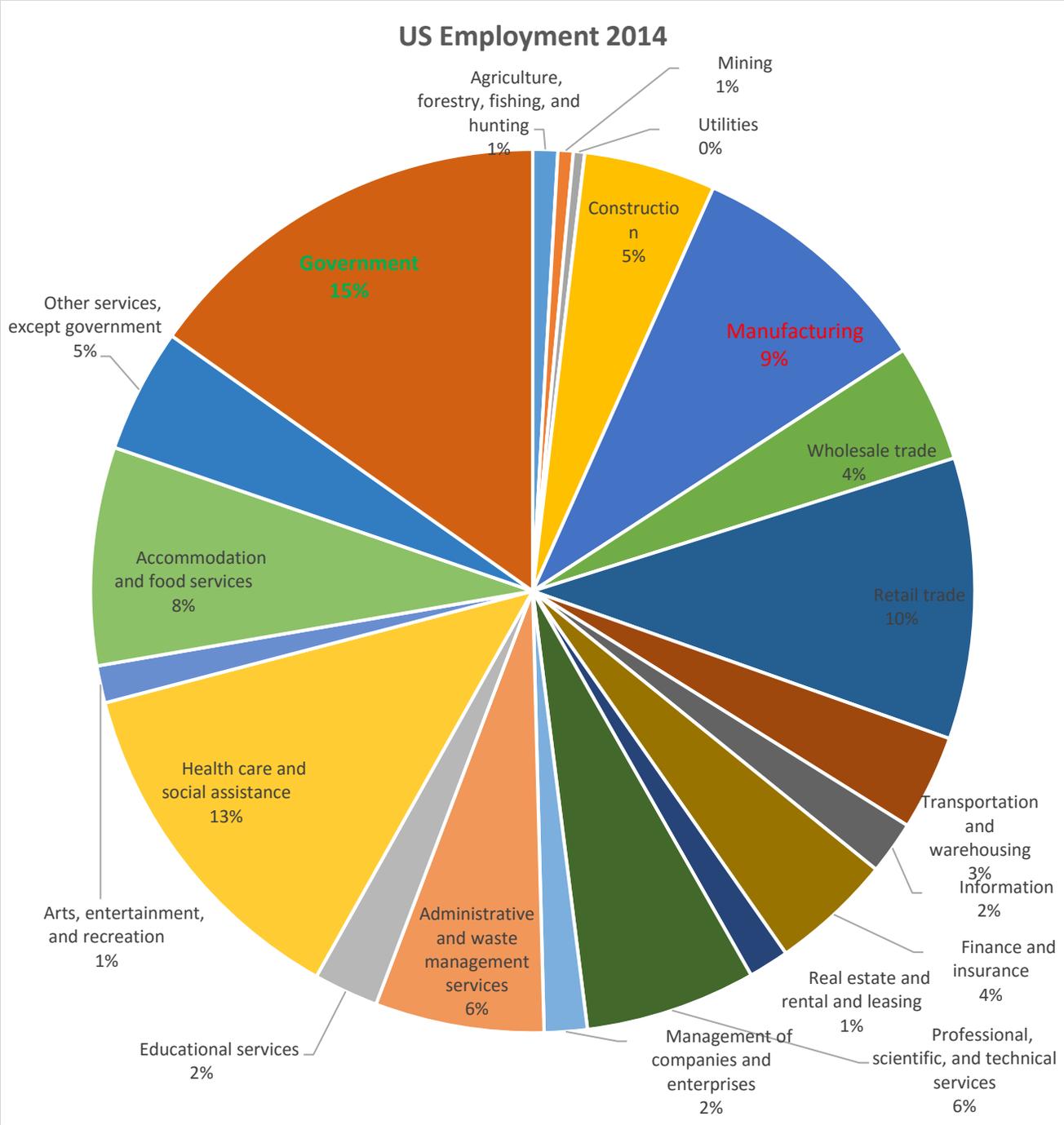
Author from World Bank

What kinds of jobs do high school graduates take? They would tend to be jobs that require moderate levels of knowledge, such as factory work, auto repair, and troubleshooting client issues in service positions. In the following graphs, we see how much has changed for workers in blue collar occupations in the US. The first chart shows the rough delineation of the US economy in 1948.



Author from BEA

Notice how important manufacturing is- about one third of all jobs were in that sector. Transportation is also significant, making up 9% of the total (public utilities were close to 0). When we move to the present day economy, we see a much more diversified landscape, reflecting all kinds of new industries, such as IT, and the overall increase in wealth leading to increases in demand for services.



Conclusion

The shrinking of manufacturing by 23% is remarkable. It is also worth pointing out that the Republican refrain about choking government is misplaced. Despite the growth in the overall size of government, the share of employment is almost the same. One would expect that government would take on more advanced roles for regulation as the economy grows,

diversifies, and becomes more complex, though obviously we should also demand a rough fiscal balance over the long-term and accountable spending. But padding of personnel rolls is not a pressing issue. If we see the growth in new occupations, then, this picture suggests that either the education system is not providing the right type of training for workers to enter growing occupations such as health care services with a high school degree, or that a high school degree is insufficient. Thus, the blue collar workers of yesterday are not smoothly transitioning into new occupations and thus a significant chunk are slipping out of the middle class. These are the core of Trump's constituency, from coal miners who want him to deny climate change to auto workers who want him to blame China and Mexico for losing jobs.

Breaking up global trade and globalisation seems far-fetched for anyone who has taken a look at where the goods and services are produced, however. A cell phone or automobile or clothing item or software is produced in many different countries. To reverse that supply chain and produce everything at home would lead to major losses in consumer surplus, i.e. major increases in prices and the lack of availability of many items. It would also hurt the beneficial aspects of reducing global poverty, which in terms of providing income mobility is beneficial for global security. Poverty creates both terrorists and migration, and poor living conditions are the sources of potential global diseases such as Ebola. As seen in the post-Brexit polls, younger and better educated people are generally pro-globalisation, though they will find fair points to criticise in terms of labour and environmental issues. What this suggests is that the real problem is with failures in global governance, whether we are discussing the effects of trade or of climate change or security or migration. Trade creates dislocations; climate change comes from a failure of global enforcement; security breakdowns come from failing states that need outside intervention; and migration comes from those security breakdowns and the lack of globally-based resources to take care of migrants close to their homes. Ignoring migrants (or other issues overseas) or sending them back will only worsen the problem. In short, *what we need in terms of solutions is more and better government, particularly on a global scale, not retrenchment*. As much as we don't see it as our responsibility, unless we improve conditions abroad, conditions at home will deteriorate.

So, we have explained Trump, and seen his solution is nothing but a red herring. But this still doesn't explain why millennials are willing to support a socialist candidate. They should be the beneficiaries of all these new jobs and global markets, and we see through the rise of new billionaires such as Zuckerberg and the general prosperity of Silicon Valley, that many are. But evidently, many others are being left out. Again, this could point to the inability of many to access jobs through failures of the education system, as well as more specific issues such as college debt, that could be addressed through policy. The dissonance among millennials extends beyond the US, as seen in widespread student strikes in Paris in recent years. There is a general feeling that this will be the first generation to have a lower standard of living to their parents. Stories abound of Italian 20-somethings living with their parents, seeing no ability to purchase housing, and are universal. It is not clear to me what lies in the way of new generations reaching new jobs, but there is one factor that deserves more attention.

A series of new studies are emerging that begin to document what millennials already know- that many jobs are being automated. My brother and I began to document this 8 years ago in a study of the movement of software, legal, accounting and other services from the US to overseas locations, all made possible by the Internet. Studies by Oxford and MIT economists lay out devastating potential. One study by Oxford economists Frey and Osborne in 2013 suggested that 47% of all jobs are susceptible to automation. We have no good data to test this out, but just think of an auto assembly line in the 1960s vs. today, or a Fedex or Amazon depot, or the disappearing need for subway drivers and cashiers. Trump may likely be moot in his attack on globalisation in that jobs are moving back on-shore, but mostly to machine, not human labour. This is part of the real challenge that is threatening the middle class and explains why as the economy grows, only a small percentage are benefiting from growth industries. There are only so many high paying jobs for advanced programmers at Microsoft, and they can't replace 1000s of easily accessible factory jobs. The continual technological revolution such as driverless cars, will only accelerate the trend. The challenge for developing countries who saw manufacturing through cheap labour as a ladder up starting to disappear as an option.

We know from previous technological revolutions, such as those in agriculture, that industry destruction has led, after a time, to new industry creation, as Josef Schumpeter pointed out. We could well be in a transition period where new jobs related to new services such as Facebook will start to proliferate, but so far it is hard to see the job growth necessary to ease the problem of inequality and declining social mobility. This angst, shared globally, is what really needs to be addressed. Without a new focus on growth and safety nets at the global level, the usual scapegoats, and the demagogues who mine them, will continue to proliferate.

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