

## **Donald Trump's Interview With The New York Times**

### **First Elaboration**

As a response to the introduction by Arthur Sulzberger Jr, Trump firstly announces that he is delighted about the opportunity to talk with The New York Times' editors and reporters. This is especially interesting because of the one-sided battle that was carried out on Twitter by Trump against The New York Times, which, a number of times during the campaign, he called by one of his signature nicknames, The "Failing" New York Times. The meeting, which originally had been scheduled for November 21, was canceled by the president-elect. On Twitter, Trump commented at 3am, "I cancelled today's meeting with the failing @nytimes when the terms and conditions of the meeting were changed at the last moment. Not nice." The next morning, at 7am, he let go of the word 'failing,' tweeting, "The meeting with the @nytimes is back on at 12:30 today." That, in short, is enormously contradictory to his display of affection to the newspaper in the interview, announcing that he had "tremendous respect" for The New York Times.

### **Trump's Administration**

At the outset, Trump was given the chance to address one specific topic that was to be talked about. The president-elect chose to prefigure his choices for key positions in his cabinet - he had only appointed Steve Bannon as chief strategist by then. Trump then specified, "We have many people for every job. [...] We have many incredible people. [...] The quality of the people is very good." Although measurements like "very good" and "incredible" are indeed highly subjective, there is legitimate and factual reason to be skeptical about his choices, a large number of which have been announced since.

The choice of a Secretary of State candidate whose appointment by the Senate is doubtful because of his non-disclosed entrepreneurial ties to a foreign country is, quite frankly, unprecedented. Trump's choice for Secretary of Defense, James Mattis, in 2005 said about the war in Afghanistan, "Actually it's quite fun to fight them, you know. It's a hell of a hoot. [...] It's fun to shoot some people. [...] It's a hell of a lot of fun to shoot them." The nominee for Attorney General, Sen. Jeff Sessions (R-AL), in 1986 was denied a federal judge position by the Senate because he was deemed too racist. Labor Secretary hopeful Andrew Puzder opposes a raise of the minimum wage, government regulation in the labor sector, an overtime workers' pay increase, and the Affordable Care Act. Furthermore, his company, CKE Restaurants, has been accused of running sexist ad campaigns and violating labor regulations. Let alone the climate change denier Scott Pruitt who is set to run the Environmental Protection Agency from January on, an institution he had filed lawsuits against during his tenure as Oklahoma's Attorney General.

### **Could He Have Won The Popular Vote?**

Donald Trump claimed in the interview that winning the popular vote was something that his campaign could have accomplished as well, stating that it would even be easier than winning the Electoral College. In fact, Secretary Clinton can tell you a thing or two about that. The margin by which she won the popular vote continued to grow until recently, as postal ballots from California and other states were still being counted. It stands at about 2.9 million votes. A candidate winning the popular vote by such a great margin while losing the Electoral College is unprecedented as well. Very famously, Al Gore in 2000 was defeated the same way, but his popular vote margin was a fifth of Clinton's. The fact that this has happened to a Democratic candidate twice lets you wonder if the Electoral College system is actually biased. In fact, claims have been made that the electoral system of the United States systematically disadvantages black and Latino citizens.

Trump's claim that he could have won the popular vote if he had campaigned differently is discouraged by the fact, that, according to exit polls, 60% of voters decided who to vote for

even before September, while only 8% decided in the week before the election. So, while his “boost campaign” during the final days in Michigan and Pennsylvania might have brought Trump the 20,000 votes from Michigan and the 70,000 votes from Pennsylvania that were necessary to tip these states, it is highly unlikely that something similar would have happened if he had campaigned to win the popular vote, given the number of 2,500,000 people, as opposed to 100,000 who tipped this year’s election.

Also, the president-elect states that campaigning would be much different - much worse, in fact - if the popular vote decided the election. His claim that candidates would stay in three to four states, quite frankly, makes zero sense. The states where campaigning would take place would not be fewer, they would be different. In every single election, that is. Very easily, one could name ten states - e.g. Vermont, Utah, California, Wyoming, Washington, Oregon, Texas, Oklahoma, Massachusetts, Kentucky - where no candidate would ever campaign because the outcome is certain two years in advance. With the popular vote deciding the election, state borders would essentially vanish. There is a large number of elections that end up with a margin of 1,000,000 votes or less - significant gains in Washington, Oregon and Utah could tip an election like that - and the year after, it might be West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Minnesota. There are more than 190 countries that hold elections on multiple levels of government, and of all these, there is one country that uses an electoral college for one level of government - for one office, even. You would guess that if the Electoral College was actually “genius,” it would have set precedent. It has not set precedent. It is not “genius.”

### **Energizing The Alt-Right**

The New York Times interview is one in a long list of Trump’s statements in which he fails to clearly disavow the racist, nationalist, and discriminatory actions and crimes committed in his name. While the president-elect “disavow[s] the group” of supporters that, at a convention, had shown Hitler Salutes to their speaker, who had proclaimed, “Hail Trump, hail our people, hail victory!” the fact that you have to wonder if Trump was going to disavow these actions instead of denying that they happened - or that he had seen them - is an alarming signal by itself, but the day Donald Trump won his first primary was the day the world stopped listening to those signals.

Trump has denied to know David Duke, the leader of the white supremacist movement, when actually, he has a long record of interviews where he was asked about Duke. Trump has failed to disavow hate crimes committed in his name. Trump has failed to denounce violent actions that his supporters committed. Trump’s supporters have committed every racist action that one could imagine, and he himself has disavowed none of it. It all fits into his narrative of a vicious primary and a vicious campaign and continues to believe that in a political campaign there are no rules, no laws, and no bilateral regard. This was the new tone set by his campaign. I fear that it’ll be around for more than four - or, God forbid, eight - years. And it’s become an export hit, see Austria’s election.

In Germany and Austria, right-wing groups such as the KKK would, by law, be illegal. In America, they are not. This, in fact, is legitimate, since there is freedom of speech. But if something is legal, it does, by no means, mean that a president should do it. And at the very least, you would expect from a president that they accept and respect basic democratic values. There is precedent for leaders elected democratically following vicious campaigns that disrespected democracy. One promised to last a thousand years, lasted twelve, and killed millions.

### **He Won’t Lock Her Up - Or: An Example Of A Campaign Promise**

“Because you’d be in jail,” Trump responded in one debate when Clinton clarified that she would be afraid of a Trump presidency. “Lock her up,” the chant went at Trump’s campaign rallies. “Is she guilty or not guilty?” Chris Christie asked at the Republican National Convention in front of a crowd of 10,000. Three guesses what the answer was. Those kinds of

public trial are extremely frightening regarding the hate and malevolence that is prevalent among the attendance.

But he won't lock her up. In the New York Times interview, he interestingly stated that he didn't "want to hurt the Clintons." This, by the way, is an enormously late point in time to come to that conclusion. But this statement joins a large number of Trump's statements that were not true either - we call them lies. Being a president for the working class, draining the swamp, locking her up, making America great - there might never have been a politician lying nearly as much as Trump did.

### **Climate Change Is Not A Hoax Created By The Chinese**

Once, years before he kicked off his presidential campaign, Trump tweeted that climate change was not real, and, after all, only a hoax created by the Chinese. I could not help but chuckle when, in November, I read a Bloomberg headline that read, "China Tells Trump That Climate Change Is No Hoax It Invented." Yes, this is a real headline, and you can see the full scope of it when you take another look and see that this is a news headline stating that a foreign country provided the most powerful man in the west with information that every schoolboy or schoolgirl aged 10 and under would know.

So, in this interview, the question came up one more time. Extracting Trump's stance on this issue is not the easiest task in the world considering that the president-elect has almost no factual knowledge about this issue (or any issue). He admits that "there is some connectivity" between human activity and the change of the climate. Quite contrastingly, he indicates that U.S. enterprises would be more effective and competitive if there were less regulations. Trump also, again opposing his own stance, says that "Clean Air is vitally important. Clean water, crystal clean water is vitally important" before somehow turning to an awkward advertising statement for his golf courses. It does seem quite like golf courses are the only thing that he associates with nature and the environment - because they are green, maybe. You could summarize that he puts economic interest way before climate issues.

In the opening paragraph, I named some of Trump's cabinet picks, among them Scott Pruitt, former Attorney General of Oklahoma and future EPA administrator. The EPA itself announced that it feared "unprecedented disaster" after Pruitt's appointment. Pruitt was part of an effort by 27 states to overturn President Obama's Clean Power Plan. Pruitt has sued the EPA because of environmental regulations - multiple times. Pruitt announced that he believed that "the debate on climate change is far from settled." Pruitt, according to Greenpeace, has received \$318,496 in campaign donations from the fossil fuel industry. That might not seem a lot, but it does when you consider that the only office that he ran for in that period was Lieutenant Governor of Oklahoma.

The "unprecedented disaster" is set to come.

### **Bonus: What I Think The Democrats Should Do To Win The 2020 Election**

The Democrats lost an election that they, in essence, were not even able to lose. Admitting defeat to a candidate that unqualified and unpopular has to be a warning sign to the officials and leaders of the party. During this campaign, populist forces on the left emerged, most notably, Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA). Those people now try to push the party toward a more populist agenda to win the 2020 election after what is expected to be a weak presidential term of Donald Trump.

Personally, I believe that division is harmful to any group of people. My ideal is, of course, having fierce discussions and debates, but also to try to find consensus and to come to a solution that most people can endorse. Democracy is no dictatorship of the majority. Democracy means that the majority decides with regard to the needs of all minorities. Even though I am a liberal - liberal in the European sense, meaning *liberal*, not *left-wing* and a progressive - and therefore oppose most of the measures that conservatives endorse, I would suggest that the Democratic Party should take a more centrist approach. If a solution is

avored strongly by 51 per cent of the population, but is opposed fiercely by 49 per cent, it is not a good solution. Period.

There is one aspect, though, that Democrats should and must learn from Bernie Sanders. The average white worker in Michigan does not care at all about diversity, or a campaign slogan that goes "Stronger Together." Compare that to Obama's successful presidential bid in 2008 - "Change We Can Believe In" - or Bernie Sanders's 2016 slogan "A Future To Believe In." See the similarity? Of course we are stronger together. Of course divisiveness is bad. But workers who cannot feed their families don't give a damn about that. They want change - change to the better - and a future. They want measures to be taken that generate jobs, that strengthen the economy, that bring prosperity, that let the people live their lives! Raising the minimum wage, guaranteeing equal pay for women workers, making college tuition-free - those are measures that the people support and that are not considered at all by the Republican party. It is time to leave the own party's ideology behind and care about the people's needs. Under President Obama, the United States did recover, did advance in all of these aspects! But better does not mean good.

And there was one man who understood that.

- Even if that was the only thing he understood.

2,318 words - M. Heinze