*American Political Settlements and the Role of Perception in Assisting Trump’s Victory*

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**Political settlements have drawn many studies in the past decades. Most studies focus on state-making, state-building and state-maintaining aspects of political settlements in developing, failing, warring, collapsed and often non-democratic states. This paper is an attempt to examine political settlements in the United States, a developed democratic state, to understand political settlements, how they are established, and maintained by the elites, and how the people’s perception of political settlements is influential in the 2016 Presidential Election. The paper is divided into two major sections. The first section begins with a comprehensive review of political settlements focusing the valuable findings and shortcomings of the literature of political settlement. The second major part examines particularly political settlements in the United States and their indications in the last Presidential election. The paper concludes that political settlements in the United States are inclusive and endurable in essence; yet, they fail to manifest that inclusiveness, which led to the rise of populism in the past years, and, as a result, assisted Donald Trump’s victory.**

***Keyword-component: 2016 Presidential Election; American politics; political settlements; Donald Trump***

1. INTRODUCTION

Political settlements (PS) are on the rise. The concept has been studied in various contexts. Development agencies tend to define PS as a developmental apparatus. Economists often see PS an equilibrium for economic stability and development. Political scientists tend to see them as a peacemaking, peace-building, and conflict-mediating tool. However, there is an uneven distribution of political settlement studies. The majority of the literature only focuses on developing and/or non-democratic states and their political settlement process. Those states include warring states, fragile, and failed states and authoritarian states. The significant part of developed democratic states' political development is apparently overlooked. This paper is an attempt to examine the political settlement in the United States as a developed democratic state to explain a recent phenomenon in the domestic politics: the triumph of Donald Trump in the 2016 Presidential election.

My central argument is that the victory of Trump is assisted by the American people’s perception of the exclusionary PS. I argue that the PS in the United States, as opposed to people’s perceptions, are inclusive and endurable by nature; however, the elites in the two major parties fail to create solidarity among the people, their self-interested policies distance the people from the parties. In short, the political settlement scheme is legitimate, but the elites’ behaviors fail to legitimize the settlements. In defending my argument, I will address the following three questions: (1) What is PS?; (2) What is PS in the United States?; and (3) How do the perceptions of the non-elites matter in the 2016 Presidential election?

To defend my argument, I will draw on political settlement theory, mainly focus on the theoretical frameworks developed by various authors since the 1990s and the definition provided by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). This paper will be divided into two major parts: (1) Clarifying the concept; and (2) Understanding American PS.

1. CLARIFYING CONCEPTS
2. *What is ‘political settlements’?*

The concept of PS has been around since the 1990s. One of the first works was done by Joseph Melling in industrial capitalism and the welfare state.[[1]](#footnote-1) In following years, a new wave of study has come up with different researchers discussing PS with different purposes. In 1995, Mushtaq Khan developed his framework of PS regarding economic and political viability. He emphasizes the role of PS and institution performance.[[2]](#footnote-2) Beside individual authors, renowned institutions including the Asian Foundation, Organization for Economic Cooperation, and Development (OECD) and the UK Department for International Development (DFID) are also leading the discussion of PS and political settlement applications.

Resulting from the recent existence and different functions, the definition of PS also varies. Dressel and Dinne define PS " regarding long-term elite power relations and negotiations that shape not only institutions but also how actors work within and around them.[[3]](#footnote-3) Brown and Grävingholt propose that PS “as property can be understood as *a plébiscite de tousles jours* (a “daily plebiscite”), i.e. an agreement on the basic parameters of social and political life that is dependent on the ongoing support and faces the daily possibility of renegotiation”[[4]](#footnote-4). In another discussion, Laws and Leftwich define PS “as the informal and formal processes, agreements, and practices that help consolidate politics, rather than violence, as a means of dealing with disagreements about interests, ideas and the distribution and use of power”[[5]](#footnote-5).

Lucey and Schünemann list significant authors in PS and their respective definition of PS[[6]](#footnote-6). As the variety of definition goes, all the descriptions seem to cover three elements: *actors*, *interest*, and *institutions[[7]](#footnote-7)*. Actors include elites and the non-elites. Interests are the purposes of each actor. And institutions are the frameworks in which actors can interact, bargain and cooperate to achieve their interests. In general, the definition of political settlement is often said to be the agreements between different interest groups, weighing more over the elites, and describe how interest groups interact within an institutional framework to achieve the goals of economic and political viability.

1. *What are the features of political settlements?*

PS is not static. As for including negotiations, agreements, and arrangements between interest groups, PS possess the following features[[8]](#footnote-8):

1. *Involving processes and practices*. PS are political processes and practices which allow interest groups to reach their goals by negotiating, bargaining and cooperating, and, at the same time exercise their power. The set of political processes and practices are contextualized into domestic conditions. Therefore, PS can serve as a framework to resolve political conflicts.
2. *Continuous and evolving*. PS should not be understood as a one-time event. It is correct that one event can trigger the process of political settlement such as peace agreement between the two groups. However, PS by nature evolves with the social, economic, and political developments. Therefore, they are continuous and changing processes in essence.
3. *Obtaining vertical and horizontal relations*. PS are not only about relationships within the elites but also between the elites and the followers: “They are ongoing ‘two-level game.’” Even though the elites take the lead in politics and economics, they may still need support from the followers to sustain the system in the long term.
4. *Not just national*. The discussion on the subnational feature of PS focuses more on policy areas. For example, a more detailed micro level of political settlement may, in fact, play a critical role in the system’s sustainability.

PS, in short, is dynamic and involves not only interactions between different elite groups horizontally, but also between the elites and the followers vertically. To say that PS is a one-off event is to underestimate the critical role of PS in the state-society relationship. PS through negotiating, compromising and cooperating result in political orders which are the fundamental elements of state-making and state-building.

1. *What are the typologies of political settlements?*

As far as the variety of definition goes, there is respectively a variety of typologies of PS. Kelsall classifies PS based on the degree of elite inclusion (inclusive vs. exclusive), bureaucratic culture (impersonal vs. personal), and means of inclusion (spoils vs. coordination)[[9]](#footnote-9). He also sketches some “easy recognizable types of political settlements” namely *inclusive, coordinated, impersonal settlements* (most enduring), *exclusive, spoils-driven, personalized settlements* (least enduring), and *hybrid settlements*. In this paper, I will focus on the basic typologies defined by Brown and Grävingholt and published by OECD in 2011. The typologies that Brown and Grävingholt propose may not be perfect, but they reflect the nature of the settlements and address their origins. The following contains five types of PS[[10]](#footnote-10):

* Engineered settlements: Explicitly negotiated, often as part of a peace process. These tend to change as the deals struck in peace negotiations are adjusted by national elites. For example Nepal, Sierra Leone, Northern Ireland.
* Informal elite pacts: Uneasy arrangements between elites that find accommodation through the brokering of interests. These may stagnate, often as a result of prolonged crisis but will remain fragile. For example Zimbabwe.
* Imposed settlements: Clear victory by one group allows them to impose a settlement on others. Maintained through a high level of security capability, often through coercion rather than consent. For example Burma.
* Entrenched settlements: High degree of legitimacy and popular acceptance that make direct challenges unlikely to succeed but may not be inclusive. For example China.
* Inclusive settlements: Settlement extends to a long-term negotiation between the state and groups in society. It evolves and is responsive to public expectations. For example South Africa, Botswana, Denmark.
1. *What can challenge political settlements?*

As discussed previously, PS are dynamic and involve not only interactions between different elite groups horizontally, but also between the elites and followers vertically. PS, in essence, “are the result of power struggles”[[11]](#footnote-11). The process of power struggles features changes in contending actors, influences of different powers both domestic and international, national contexts, and uncertainty in doing politics. However, this does not necessarily mean all PS are either fragile or solidified. In fact, as the typologies indicate, some PS are more sustainable while others are more vulnerable. Inclusive settlements stand out to be more sustainable than others. Parks and Cole list nine factors that could change a political settlement[[12]](#footnote-12). They include:

1. A powerful, excluded elite faction “opts in” to the political settlement
2. A new alliance is formed between excluded groups and an elite faction
3. An influential new group emerges
4. Non-elite groups mobilize around shared interests for reform
5. A state agency becomes robust and independent of the settlement
6. Changes in legitimacy of the state or its leadership
7. Changes in coercive capacity under the control of the dominant elite coalition
8. An alliance of excluded elites challenges the current ruling coalition and the settlement it has established
9. An outside force intervenes

Challenges to PS can come from within and without the states. From within, it is the collision of interests, the departure, and establishment of agreements, entry of new groups and the rise of non-elite groups. From without, international forces can intervene domestic politics in various economic and military ways.

1. *How do political settlements sustain?*

Facing such challenges, how does a political settlement sustain? Parks and Cole argue that there are four methods to maintain PS, namely: coercion, co-optation, legitimacy, and international intervention[[13]](#footnote-13). *Coercion* is often based on military and police forces. It is meant to suppress oppositions and strengthen the ruling power. However, because of its suppressive nature, coercion does not enable a legitimate political settlement, which, in turn, can backlash as a threat to the existing PS. Thus, coercion makes the system more fragile to oppositions. *Co-optation* usually refers to coalitions between groups within the PS. This method works to sustain the current system and may work well if problems come from inside. But co-optation is less likely to work if the problems arise externally. For example, the rise of non-elite groups would pose a significant threat to prolonging the existing system without making it more inclusive of the non-elite groups. *International intervention* faces the same issues of legitimacy and effectiveness. Brown and Gravingholt agree that “it is virtually impossible for external actors to impose a lasting settlement.”[[14]](#footnote-14) Moreover, the issue of legitimacy is not only present in the intervened state itself but also in the intervening state. As a result, international intervention does not necessarily guarantee long-term political settlement stability.

The last method is building and maintaining *legitimacy*. Among the four methods, legitimacy stands out to secure more stable and long-term PS: “the more widely the claim to legitimacy is accepted, the greater the prospects for stability of the political settlement”[[15]](#footnote-15). According to Parks and Coles, there are many ways that legitimacy can be built and maintained. As a result, there are also different types of legitimacy for each of which we can come up with examples as follow:

* Traditional authority of leadership, for example, Thailand and Bhutan.
* Capability to defend against external enemies, for example, South Korea.
* Protection from violent internal threats such as Sri Lanka.
* Electoral mandate including democracies like the US, the UK, India, and Indonesia.
* Developmental legitimacy, for example, Singapore, China, Bangladesh, and Vietnam.

Legitimacy brings about more stability and sustainability to the PS. Intuitively, legitimacy creates a sense of ownership, bonds, attachments, belonging, and nationalism. The relationships between state and society, between the government and the people, and between the elites and the non-elite groups are created, legitimized, and sustained by sharing common history, culture, and goals. Especially, in the Asian context, the goals of economic development have allowed many authoritarian states to maintain the PS[[16]](#footnote-16).

1. *Understanding political settlements, the “why?” and the “what’s more?”*

The first and most important question is that: is there such a thing called ‘political settlements’? The question may sound silly but certainly justifiable. PS, as discussed previously, is the framework in which different interest groups interact, cooperate, compromise, bargain, and struggle for power. Therefore, PS is, indeed, structural and more of an institutional structuralist perception. More intuitively, PS can be understood as norms and code of conducts in doing politics within a state; therefore, can be in formal written forms or informal tacit forms. To a certain extent, PS result in political cultures. This discussion may go beyond the scope of this paper; thus, further exploration shall be presented in another paper.

Applying into practice, PS can be intuitively proven existence. The second question is that: why do we need to understand PS? As we have discussed definitions, features, and essential elements as well as challenges and methods to sustain of PS, it is fair to draw some conclusions at this point. First, PS, with their features discussed above, serve the role of peacemaking, peacebuilding, and economic and political development. Understanding PS allows to not only understand the interactions of interest groups but also project how the interactions can be used to promote sustainability, stability, and development. Dressel and Dinnen emphasize that “political settlements play a critical role in shaping the form, nature, and performance of institutions, even as the institutions themselves help consolidate and embed particular settlements.”[[17]](#footnote-17)

Understanding PS is more crucial to developing, weak, collapsing and failed states. PS can provide a more comprehensive explanation of the failure and open conservations to restore political stability. And the fact is that a significant amount of literature of PS mainly focuses on developing, warring, and failing states in. Renowned institutions including OECD, DFID, and the Asia Foundation specifically work on economic and political development in developing states, including the conversations of the role of donors and how donors play their part within the PS in the receipt states.[[18]](#footnote-18) In facing global terrorism, especially when collapsed and failing states are the fertile land for terrorism[[19]](#footnote-19), understanding of PS will prevent further collapse and help fight terrorism.

However, the study of PS also faces some limitations, including conceptual confusion, elite focus, contextualization and extension, and lack of empirical work.[[20]](#footnote-20) In particular, Dressel and Dinnen discuss four limitations of political settlement analysis:

* *Conceptual confusion* means that “the concept has gradually moved away from its earlier application to economic institutions and growth outcomes to such new areas as peace and stability.” The term ‘inclusiveness’ as “a critical dimension of PS is also problematic.” The question is “who needs to be included and what the effects will be for peace and economic development.”[[21]](#footnote-21)
* *Elite focus* implies two things. First, the term “elites” needs to be clarified because “different country contexts require a very different understanding of what an elite is.” Moreover, the role of non-elite groups should be examined more thoroughly. PS do not happen within or for the elites, they involve and have direct impacts on the non-elite population. Thus, in studying PS, the non-elite element should be taken into account seriously.
* *Contextualization and extension* refer to the need to contextualize PS into “local variables,” and include transnational actors in the broader context of political settlement applications.
* *Lack of empirical work* states that “most existing works have been conceptual in nature, with individual country experiences used simply as an illustration.” Thus, there is a need for more empirical studies to illustrate how the theory works in reality.

However, there are more to clarify in the four limitations of studying PS that Dressel and Dinnen present. First, besides considering the non-elites, it is also essential to examine the non-elite perceptions of the existing PS. Their perceptions assert a tremendous influence on the system’s legitimacy, and, consequently, the settlement’s sustainability. Second, in examining social factors that may affect the PS, comparative methods can be employs to systematically compare and contrast different state’s PS and avoid bias in generating conclusions.

Apart from the above discussions, there is also a need to study PS in developed democratic states. The literature of PS mainly focuses on developing, collapsing, and collapsed states and glosses over developed democratic states. Considering the globally political development, especially after recent events of Brexit and the US 2016 Election with Donald Trump’s triumph, it becomes more relevant to look at PS in developed democratic states. Because big and powerful states like the US and the UK can assert powerful influences on other states, studying PS in such states can help understanding the global PS analytically. In that light, this paper is an attempt to portray the political settlement in the US and how Donald Trump could manipulate the people’s perceptions of PS to win the election.

1. UNDERSTANDING POLITICAL SETTLEMENTS IN THE U.S.

In order understand PS in the US, it is essential to understand the state’s history. The US possesses a unique social, political, and economic history of development. Founded in 1776, but the history of an independent, unified, and the free U.S. did not exist until the Civil War ended in 1865. During the two World Wars, thanks to its geographic location, the US was not damaged but raised to become an economic power.[[22]](#footnote-22) Ironically, even though the US claims to be a democracy meaning the people rule, US political development tells the story of minority oppression and racial discriminations. Fraser and Gerstle write:

The country is a democracy. The people rule. And yet the people do not rule; elites, patriciates, castes, classes have ruled in their stead. Sometimes they seem to rule with the people’s interests in mind, sometimes not.[[23]](#footnote-23)

Therefore, given its unique history and political as well as economic developments, this paper employs the definition of PS by DFID (2010):

PS is the expression of a common understanding, usually forged between elites, about how power is organized and exercised. They include formal institutions for managing political and economic relations, such as electoral processes, peace agreements, parliaments, constitutions, and market regulations. But they also include informal, often unarticulated agreements that underpin a political system, such as deals between elites on the division of spoils. PS establish the basic rules governing economic relations and resource allocation.[[24]](#footnote-24)

1. *Who are the elites in the US?*

Because “American state-building was the natural result of modernity as America followed other nations—European nations—in its developmental trajectory,”[[25]](#footnote-25)The American elites did not go through decades of the king and church's intervention, they arrived right at independence and obtained economic power, producing dominant groups of corporate elites. Domhoff’s conclusion further clarifies that:

There are two separate but intertwined historical reasons for class domination in the United States. First, the corporate community in America is stronger because it did not have to contend with feudal aristocrats, steady states, and the hierarchy of an established church. Second, those who work for wages and salaries were weaker as a class than in other democratic countries because they have never been able to establish an organizational base in either the economy or the political system.[[26]](#footnote-26)

However, it is also justified to note that history of elites in America is extremely dynamic as the elites evolve with the nation. Fraser and Gerstle indicate that: “The American history is populated with numerous kinds of elites – some regional, other national; some that staked their prestige solely on wealth, others that derived their preeminence from politics; some grounded in professional, religious, or educational expertise, others in the influence they exercise in particular ethnic or racial communities.”[[27]](#footnote-27)

More specifically, in contemporary political history of the US, as Domhoff points out it is the “lobbyists from corporations, law firms, and trade associations play a key role in shaping government on narrow issues of concern to specific corporations or business sectors, and the policy-making network supplies new policy directions on major issues, along with top-level governmental appointees to implement those policies.”[[28]](#footnote-28) When looking at the government under both Republican and Democratic administrations, the governments always resonate wealth and power of the elites in America. In the same argument of who rules America, Domhoff also addresses the fact that “most top appointees in both Republican and Democratic administrations are corporate executives and corporate lawyers.”[[29]](#footnote-29)

The recent years witnessed a remarkable change in US politics. More colors are added to the Congress. However, even though almost one-fifth of the House and Senate are a racial or ethnic minority, the "Congress remains disproportionately white when compared with the U.S. population," Also according to Pew Research Center in 2015, the gap between white vs. non-white compared to the proportional population is, in fact, widened: in 2015, "whites account for 83% of the new Congress but just 62% of the population. In 1981, 94% of Congress was white compared with about 80% of the U.S. population.”[[30]](#footnote-30)

Therefore, we could conclude that the majority of American elites are white and wealthy. They are the ones who rule this country yet generally "distaste for talking about social class openly and directly."[[31]](#footnote-31) Their power “build on their structural economic power, their storehouse of policy expertise, and their success in the electoral arena to dominate the federal government on the issues about which they care.”[[32]](#footnote-32) In short, "the footprint of wealth and power is visible across the whole span of American history.”[[33]](#footnote-33)

1. *Mapping political settlements in the US.*

Now that we have identified who are the American elites, the next step is to map the PS in which they have used to rule the nation. This paper is adopting the framework that is designed by Parks and Cole[[34]](#footnote-34) to illustrate the “expression of a common understanding, usually forged between elites, about how power is organized and exercised” (DFID, 2010). The groups are filled based on the analysis that was given above:

1. Groups A is the lobbyists, law firms, financial institutions;

2. Group B is political elites, congressmen, politicians;

3. Group C is opposition party (either Republican or Democrat party, depending on the ruling party at the time), and civil society;

4. Group D is celebrities, intellectual elites, religious leaders, athletes, and other small political parties.

PS in the US, as a result, can be understood as agreements among elite and non-elite forces in formal and informal institutions to sustain the current political order: rich white-dominated PS.

Figure 1: Mapping Political Settlement



The next question is to classify the political settlement in the US. Reflecting on the political and historical development of the US, the nation’s PS started as engineered settlements negotiated by national elites. The Civil War marked a change in PS. They became imposed a settlement. The victory of the northern states put an end to slavery and set up new PS in the nation. As the democracy involved and consolidated, the nation now appears to obtain more inclusive settlements; in 1863, slavery was declared ended in America. In 1920, women were given the right to vote; in 1954, racial segregation in schools became unconstitutional.[[35]](#footnote-35) One may further argue that the electoral systems in America foster the inclusiveness of the PS. The response is both ‘yes’ and ‘no.’ The Electoral College system in the US is said to secure representation and power balance among the fifty states. This means regardless of the size or population the Electoral College system enables each state to assert certain weight on the presidential election. This may create inclusiveness regarding counting state-wise participation, but simultaneously and potentially bring a sense of exclusiveness: one vote does not make a difference, and, popular votes do not matter in the presidential election.

However, it is essential to keep in mind that America has a robust civil society which can assert impacts on the government. Civil society in America "serves as an intermediary between the state and the individual, enhances citizen participation in public affairs, protects citizens from too powerful government, and encourages greater checks and balances as well as pluralism in society.”[[36]](#footnote-36) The dominant presence of civil society, as a result, secures more inclusiveness in American PS. Powerful civil groups, for example, religious groups can create a massive impact on state policies. Taking the Catholic Church as an example, it has been asserting significant influence on state's policies on abortion and same-sex marriage.[[37]](#footnote-37) Given the above discussion, the conclusion is that, by definition, the American PS are inclusive and co-operative, and they do have political apparatus to foster private participation. However, how do we explain the recent dissents of the population towards the government, especially regarding the 2016 presidential election and the victory of Donald Trump, who used to be seen as the unelectable?

1. *Do perceptions matter?*

In the above discussion, we have discussed the inclusiveness of American PS, mainly emphasized on the role of electoral system and civil society in ensuring public participation in politics. However, the presidential election in November 2016 signifies a strong sense of anti-Washington in the population. Bernie Sanders from the Democratic Party and Donald Trump from the Republican Party are the vocals of the anti-elites. Trump made it to the presidential election and became the 45th president of the United States, marking the 2016 presidential election “one of the biggest political upsets in US history.”[[38]](#footnote-38) The election exit polls indicate valuable explanations of Trump’s triumph[[39]](#footnote-39):

* Trump won among the white, college and under college education, rural voters.
* Trump also won among the voters with income more than $50,000/year.
* Clinton won among the minorities, voters with post-graduate education and voters with income lower than $50,000/year.
* The Democratic Party faced a lower turnout while Republican Party enjoyed a rise in participation.

What could explain the rise of the Republican nominee, Donald Trump, and the lower turnout of the Democratic Party? The exit polls reflect a deeply divided nation, but more importantly, that division has become more complicated not only regarding income or race, but genders, area, and education. During the election campaign, the House of Republican and Trump had successfully created fears among the population, and, as a result, were able to draw support among white nationalists. The House of Republican issued statements on the Obama administration, spurring sentiments that the nation is on the wrong track, foreign power will pose a significant threat to America, and the future is worse for the next generations. They also spurred a sense of being abandoned by the government among voters, especially among members of institutions, especially religious institutions.[[40]](#footnote-40) Trump’s campaign slogan “Make America Great Again” ignited a strong nationalist sentiment and “spoke to many Americans who had a deep sense that the country has lost something essential and who have lacked the terms in which to describe what the corrosion of our core institutions has meant in their lives.”[[41]](#footnote-41) The exit polls indicate that Trump won among veterans and rural population. In general, it is not a rush to conclude that these populations have a stronger nationalist perspective compared to the cosmopolitan perspective of urban populations.

1. *The rise of populism and Donald Trump in the populist suit.*

There is a substantial proof that American people are tired of the Washington elites: "American voters are struggling to deal with their anger and distrust of a government that fails to arrive at productive legislation for the public good. People are angry, frustrated, and scared about the state of the economy, government spending, health care changes, terrorism, and immigration reform.”[[42]](#footnote-42) Even though this nation is democratic, the people are supposed to rule, the state’s policies are largely made by and for the ruling elites. Teselle writes:

People who have been laid off or have to live with “two-tier” labor agreements, or whose unions have been busted, or who resent what union members have, or are trying to pay mortgages on homes in declining communities, are fed up. They feel they have been taken for granted too long. […] They vote for Trump. He talks the same language.[[43]](#footnote-43)

Thus, even though American PS are inclusive in essence, the elites fail to manifest that inclusiveness. National policies can serve as a two-edged sword. On the one hand, policies may please people who gain direct impacts and share ownership in the policies. On the other hand, it may upset the people who are distant from the goals of such policies and are not benefited instead negatively impacted by the policies not only in the short-term but also in the long-term.

The sense of being abandoned by the party also struck Democratic voters. The Democratic Party with two victories of President Obama overlooked its base in the 2016 election.[[44]](#footnote-44) Thus, to create a sense of inclusiveness, parties should never take for granted voters’ support. In fact, voters’ loyalty less matter when it comes to resolving issues.[[45]](#footnote-45) In a bigger picture, the people have lost faith and security. The breakdown of institutions including the national security, the bureaucracy systems, shut down of government, the manipulation that the Wall Street people assert in the government, and the failure of politicians to address and resolve these issues have led to the distrust and anger of the people, and, consequently, led to the rise of populism in the 2016 Presidential Election. Therefore, Trump's "drain the swamp" enables him to draw support from a bigger population who already dissented from the "swamp."

However, Donald Trump is not a populist. A populist captures the belief that “virtue resides in the simple people, who are the overwhelming majority, and in their collective traditions.”[[46]](#footnote-46) Trump does not represent that belief. Trump himself is an elite. His achievements and wealth are built on the opposite side of populist ideologies. His rhetoric may sound populist, but his business does not speak for that. Far from being "the defender of little people against the elites," Trump plays games of fears. He fears people of their social well-being. He makes them afraid of losing American essentials and the worse-off future for the next generation. As opposed to his idea of "drain the swamp," as he is making appointments for government positions, Trump's cabinet is going to be filling the Washington swamp with the same mud.[[47]](#footnote-47) Trump is going nowhere out of the Republican and Democratic tradition to appoint high profile people from corporates into his cabinet. America is so far not moving a bit away from the Washington swamp.

1. CONCLUSION

The study of PS has shed lights on economic, social, and political developments virtually in developing and non-democratic states. This paper is an attempt to fill in the literature gap of PS in a developed democratic country like the US concerning how the perception of PS may influence voting behaviors. As discussed in the paper, PS in the US, in essence, is inclusive and endurable. They have political apparatuses including electoral system and civil society to ensure citizen participation in politics. Policies made by the elites of the two major parties have divided the nation, left almost half of the country to feel abandoned. It is the self-interests of the elites and their failure to subscribe the people's needs that trigger the rise of populism and the victory of Donald Trump in his populist suit. In short, PS and their manifestations should be made visible to the non-elites. Especially, as for the case of the US, the non-elites do possess substantial power. Therefore, to sustain any political settlement in this nation, the elites should engage and relate the non-elites in running the country.

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