

KHEZRI: How Donald Trump is using the disruptive business model to win



Photo by: Steve Helber

In this photo taken May 5, 2016, Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump speaks in Charleston, W. Va. There's no cheering at the White House for Donald Trump, but his ascent as the presumptive Republican nominee means a few of President Barack Obama's key achievements could be more likely to survive after he leaves office. (AP Photo/Steve Helber)

By Bijan Khezri - - Sunday, May 8, 2016

A campaign built on “racism, sexism and xenophobia”, in the words of Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren, echoes a broadly held view across Europe of Donald Trump’s rise to become the presumptive Republican nominee. And what a journey his rise has been. Initially decried as a short-lived and amusing U.S.-style campaign-with-no-future that is better to be relegated to the entertainment section according to the Huffington Post, the Trump phenomenon eventually turned out to be bigger than the persona Trump. It’s the establishment, stupid! By refusing to back Trump-for-President, GOP grandees such as Mitt Romney and the Bush family are likely to further fuel the broader public appeal of Mr. Trump.

“Wrong, wrong, wrong — to the very end, we got it wrong” is the verdict of journalism rendered by the New York Times’s Jim Rutenberg. “You can continue to blame all the wrong calls this year on new challenges in telephone polling when so many Americans — especially the young — do not have landlines and are therefore hard to track down. Or you can blame the unpredictability of an angry and politically peripatetic electorate”. Indeed, traditional modes of analysis and prediction fall short and miss capturing the exponen-

tial force of disintermediation defining consumer demands now moving from business into politics.

The commercial launch of the Internet — disintermediation's most potent foundational force of our time — was then ridiculed by business establishment, including Microsoft: leaders were unready, confused, and challenged to re-sense a transformative environment and adopt a new mindset. E-commerce and peer-to-peer business models, driverless-cars and banking-disrupting blockchain technologies all follow the same pattern over time, with one certain endgame: disintermediation — defined as shortening the path to fulfillment at radically improved cost and transparency — will always win.

This is the irreversible trend and signature of our time. This is what people strive for in their daily lives but cannot find in politics. In fact, the political system and the establishment it continues producing are fundamentally counter-clocked: increasing layers of bureaucracy and party-entrapment are diluting accountability with zero fulfillment of voters' real needs and expectations as an end result.

Here comes Donald Trump: independently wealthy, dismissive of the intermediating party platform, and powered by a fearless drive to directly hold establishment accountable for 'America not winning'. Whatever the political message, people's decreasing purchasing power and non-existent social mobility are the product of a dysfunctional system.

The real force that is propelling Mr. Trump is an authentically self-styled portray of a man who is proactively taking on a broken system, successfully disintermediating the path to action and certainty of fulfillment. His 'out-of-order' statements, duly followed by electoral wins, become a symbolic representation of the very political mission itself. Winning.

Historically, people have been voting for either a party or a well-defined and principled policy-program. Mr. Trump has neither his party leadership's support nor does the policy rhetoric appears to be programmatic. But that does not diminish his prospects for winning the presidency. On the contrary, it reinforces the broadly appealing message that the challenge of our time is not just at a policy level but, more importantly, is of a systemic nature, too. Mr. Trump will be best understood as a phenomenon inaugurating a new era of US politics where party lines are disrupted and disintermediated while calls for change and action are radicalizing. This is not a matter of drifting to the far-right.

Following this year's U.S. presidential campaign as well as the recent pre-electoral victory of Austria's anti-establishment candidate Franz Fischer and possibly one in France to follow next year, one important question arises for the political leadership on both sides of the Atlantic to address: what is your purposeful meaning in a radically transformative world — a world that certainly requires a fundamentally updated antenna to connect to voters and authentic capability to deliver fulfillment?

All disruptive technologies of our time do share one common philosophy: a call for self-empowerment, accountability and disintermediated efficiency. Any political system and leadership that has a chance of standing the test of time must eventually embody this call followed with transformative action. Mr. Trump, while his hairstyle may be out of date, is actually a highly successful counter-product of our time and system. For Western democracy to renew itself and stay relevant to the electoral base, it must continue generating radically anti-systemic forces. Otherwise, it will just die in prolonged decay. And only Mr. Trump is actively doing something about it.

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