

# None Dare Call It Victory: Analysis of US 2018 Elections

## Part II

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*For months, the leadership of the Democratic Party hyped the message that a ‘blue wave’ was on its way that would politically engulf Trump and reverse his policies. Well, the wave washed up on shore on November 6, 2018, but Trump barely got his feet wet.*

The failure of Democratic Party leaders’ 2018 strategy to deliver as promised last night should also raise some serious questions about its strategy going forward for 2020. That strategy focused on running women and a few veterans in suburban districts and targeting the independent voter—a Suburbia Strategy—i.e. an approach apparently abandoning the 2008 successful Democratic strategy of targeting millennials, blacks and latinos, and union workers who since 2012 have been steadily reducing their support for Democrats. But the Dems believe their new Suburbia Strategy works. As former House Speaker, Nancy Pelosi, declared to the media on November 6 after polls closed, the Dems had just won “a great victory”. But was it ‘great’? Or even a ‘victory’?

And is the Suburbia Strategy targeting women and independents in the ‘burbs a formula for winning anything but a couple dozen or so toss up, suburban House districts in off year elections? If not, what is—given the Democrat Party’s abandonment of strategies that once were successful?

If one listens to the talking heads of pro-Democratic media like MSNBC or anti-Trump CNN, they echoed Pelosi in believing the answer is ‘yes’. The message was the Dems won big time. Center-left periodicals like The Nation magazine declared “We Won!”. Even Democracy Now reported it was an “Historic Midterm”. More mainstream liberal media, like the Washington Post, editorialized the election gave the Dems in 2020 “a path to victory”. Ditto similar spin from the New York Times.

A closer analysis, however, shows if the Dems repeat and run their suburbia-women-independents strategy again two years from now it will be a path to defeat in 2020. And if they then lose again and do not stop Trump again two years from now- for they certainly did not stop Trump this stop around as they promised—it will likely be their end as a major party contender in national politics in the 2020s.

### **None Dare Call It Victory**

True, the Dems won the US House of Representatives, but not by any historic margin. Not like they lost it in 2010. The average historical turnover of House seats in midterms for decades has been about 30. That’s probably the upper limit of what Dems will win in 2018, give or take a few more yet to be decided seats by late vote tallies. And it may be less than

30. A net swing of 30 in the House is just an average recovery of seats for the out party in midterms. That's not an historic sweep or blue wave by any means. Trump won't lose sleep over that.

But he will stay up late now tweeting a clear victory for his team in the Senate, where results for 2018 will soon prove strategically devastating for the Dems. Historically in midterm elections the out party is able to swing its way a net gain on average of 4 seats in the Senate. But the Democrats lost four seats, not gained them. That's an historic defeat. In the Senate, the blue wave predicted to roll in was replaced by the red tide that continued to roll out.

Sad to say, the Dems' Suburbia Strategy has failed to put any dent into the Trump machine, which deepened its hold on red states America, even if the Dems chipped away at its ragged edge here and there. And that failure has consequences. Here's just some:

- With the Senate now even more firmly behind Trump, with a majority of 54 Republicans, any possibility of impeachment of Trump by the House is out of the question. Moreover, Trump will now likely get to select a third conservative, pro-business Supreme Court judge. And with a 54 majority, he could nominate Genghis Khan and the 'in his pocket' Senate would vote him up.
- A locked in Senate majority also means that Mitch McConnell will now go even more aggressive attacking social security, Medicare, education spending than he's already signaled. And watch for an even larger flood of highly conservative, mid-level federal court appointments than those that have already been pushed through Congress.
- The Democrats' Senate debacle will not only solidify the big handouts to businesses and investors in tax cuts and deregulation under Trump's first two years, but will mean a Senate now firmly in the hands of Republicans and Trump willing to undertake renewed attacks on abortion rights, on immigrants, and workers' rights for another two years.
- Another immediate consequence is that Trump's 2018 \$4t trillion tax cuts for investors, businesses, and the wealthiest 1% and his sweeping deregulation of business are now firmly entrenched for at least another six years. It's not surprising that the US stock market surged 545 pts. on November 7, the day after the elections. Investors and the wealthy now know the Trump windfall tax that boosted their profits and capital gains by 20%-25%, and his deregulation policies that lowered costs even more, are now baked in long term.

While Trump's Republicans expanded their control of the Senate throughout nearly all the rest of 'red America', by unseating Democrat Senators in Indiana, Missouri, Florida, and North Dakota, they retained control of strategic governorships in Georgia, Florida, Ohio, and elsewhere. The Republican red state governorships are strategic for several reasons: first, because Florida and Ohio are key swing states in presidential elections. They are also states that have been notorious in the past for manipulating election outcomes (Florida 2000), Ohio (2004) and suppressing voters' right. Like Florida and Ohio before, in 2018 Georgia appears to be leading the way in voter suppression, as is North Dakota where potentially 30,000 Native Americans' voting rights were restricted. Both states have been identified for weeks as having undertaken voter suppression measures.

Moreover, Republicans will likely win the governorship in Georgia, where votes are still being contested in a narrow result. And should they win, it will be only because Georgia's Republican governor candidate, Brian Kemp, as the standing Secretary of State in charge of elections, personally engineered the voter suppression on his own behalf.

Another swing state, North Carolina, also notorious for voter suppression initiatives, has now just passed a ballot measure to allow its legislature to restrict voters rights still further. The Trump voter suppression offensive remains thus well intact and continues to expand its footprint in anticipation of 2020 elections.

What should worry Democrats for 2020 is that all these swing states with long standing voter suppression and gerrymandering histories—i.e. Florida, Ohio, Georgia, North Carolina (add Texas as well)—will remain in the hands of Trump Republican governors come the 2020 elections.

- The Senate and strategic Governorship wins for Trump will now embolden red state right wing radicals to become even more aggressive and organized. Bannon and his billionaire buddies—the Mercers, Adelsons, et. al.—will see to that.
- Not the least significant consequence of the questionable Democratic victory is that Trump is now, in a way, in a stronger position to deal with the Mueller investigation.

He fired his Justice Dept. Secretary, Jeff Sessions, the day after the elections, replacing him with yet another 'yes man', Whitaker. Rod Rosenstein, the second in charge at the Department and liaison with Mueller, may likely be next pushed out. That leaves Mueller out on a limb—unless he moves the investigation to the House under the Democrats before getting fired himself. But that shift would make the Mueller investigation look like a partisan Democratic investigation.

- And no one should expect the House Democrats now to seriously pursue Trump impeachment.

The House has authority to raise impeachment but the Senate must conduct the impeachment trial, and that's just not going to happen now with 54 solid Republican Senators and Trump knows it. So the Dems in the House won't even try to raise impeachment on the House floor. They'll do a PR campaign for the media from the perch of House Committee hearings. No matter what Trump does from here on out, no matter what House committee hearings turn up in his tax returns (which will not be shared with the public), and no matter what Mueller reports out, it will all be a 'smoke and mirrors' offensive to stop Trump by Pelosi and her Dems in the US House of Representatives.

### **The Pelosi-Trump Bipartisan 'Lovefest'**

Further mitigating against any Democratic moves against Trump in the House is what appears to be an emerging 'love fest' between Trump and Nancy Pelosi. Pelosi repeatedly emphasized in her statement to the press on November 6,, the Democrat party leadership is going to go big on bipartisanship (again!). She signaled to Trump a desire for bipartisanship several times. Trump quickly responded to the overture by calling Pelosi, praising her publicly, and then tweeting that she should be the Speaker of the House now that the Dems

have taken it back.

So Obama era Democrat Party bipartisanship is back, and we know what that produced: Obama continually held out the bipartisan offer, the Republican dog continually bit his hand. Mitch McConnell refused and turned down offers to compromise again and again. The result was a failure of an economic recovery for all but bankers and investors. Obama's 2008 coalition and base thereafter dribbled away and then disappeared altogether in 2016. The Obama 2008 coalition of youth, latinos, blacks and union labor dissolved as fast as it was formed. The result of that was not only the debacle of 2016, but the subsequent conservative conquest of the Supreme Court and virtually the entire federal judiciary under Trump, an across the board wipeout of decades of business regulations, a \$4 trillion tax windfall for business, investors and wealthy households, a total retreat on climate change, and a descent into a nasty political culture of emerging 'white nationalism' and increasing social violence and polarization. It all began with Obama's naïve bipartisanship that we now see Democrat Party leaders like Pelosi (and no doubt the corporate moneybags on the DNC) attempting to resurrect once again.

Bipartisanship is a political indicator of a party no longer convinced of its own ability to lead and forge a new direction. Contrast the results of Democratic Party bipartisanship from Obama to Pelosi with Republican party rejection of anything bipartisan. Who prevailed proposing bipartisanship? Who won rejecting it? Yet, here we go again with Obama-like bipartisanship being offered by Pelosi. It will be a set-up for Democratic failure in 2020, just as it was after 2008.

Here's my prediction why:

A bipartisan approach by the Democrat House will result in Dems getting the short end of the legislative stick once again. Policy areas where Pelosi-Trump may agree include

- infrastructure spending,
- limits on prescription drug price gouging by big Pharma companies,
- token 5% tax cuts for median income family households,
- paid family leave

But Pelosi legislative proposals will then run into a wall of opposition in Mitch McConnell's Senate that will demand significant cuts to Medicare, Medicaid, Food Stamps, Housing, Education and other programs as a condition of Senate support for passage of their proposals. In addition, to get something passed, the Pelosi Dems will have to agree to watered down versions of their proposals as well. They'll then get outmaneuvered in House-Senate conference committee, agreeing to the watered down proposals and the least publicly obvious and onerous of McConnell's cuts to social programs—i.e. just to get something passed. If they don't agree to McConnell's compromises, they will appear to be voting against their own proposals. Either way, the Dems again will look ineffective again to their base, as they had throughout 2008-16. They will have walked into the bipartisan trap, and Trump-McConnell will slam the door behind them in 2020.

But we've seen that story before—under Jimmy Carter after 1978, in Bill Clinton's second term, and during Obama's first.

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