

# Donald Trump and the fourth turning

In 1997, William Strauss and Neil Howe published their *The Fourth Turning: An American Prophecy* (Broadway Books). The book triggered something of a national conversation which continues to this day. Their thesis was that U.S. history has passed through lengthy cycles, each lasting 70 – 75 years. Each cycle comes divided into smaller units called turnings. Each turning has its own cultural identity, preoccupations, and mood.

According to *The Fourth Turning*, the first turning in any cycle is called a High. The second, an Awakening. The third, an Unraveling. The fourth, a Crisis. Highs are characterized by strong institutions and institution-bound values, conformity, and a generalized spirit of optimism. An Awakening calls institutions and their values into question. Individualism appears, via demands for free expression; conformity is increasingly rejected, but not optimism which is into cultural idealism and a mass desire for transformation. Eventually the Awakening gives way to an Unraveling. The preceding values have lost their legitimacy, but it is increasingly unclear what replaces them. People decide this for themselves. A do-your-own-thing individualism thus reigns. Optimism gives way to cultural pessimism, especially among those still loyal to preceding valuations. Finally, a Crisis hits, often in the form of a severe shock to the body politic or the economy. Sometimes other transitions from turning to turning are marked by sudden jolts, although this is not always the case.

Different turnings give rise to generations with different mindsets based on how they are raised and what is happening around them when they come of age. A Prophet Generation is born during a High and comes of age during an Awakening. Their

parents are often authoritarian, in tune with the spirit of the High, and their children rebel. Think of the Baby Boomers, who ranged across the hippies and “consciousness raising” gurus to the first high-tech whiz kids such as Steve Jobs. A Nomad Generation is born during an Awakening and comes of age during an Unraveling. Think of so-called Generation X: latch-key kids, punk rockers, goths in black, etc. Their parents were busy “finding themselves,” and the economy was also beginning to struggle, forcing both parents into the workforce. They were often on their own psychologically, and adapted.

A Hero Generation is born during an Unraveling and comes of age during a Crisis. Their parents were often just trying to survive. They learn resilience, and sacrifice for the future. I think of my parents’ generation, who fought and won World War II and went on to build the real economic boom of the 1950s – 1960s. The Millennials fall into this category now, which means that whatever has been dumped on them (soaring college tuition and massive debt amidst a lousy job market), much may be required of them in the near future if the country is to survive intact. Finally, an Artist Generation is born during a Crisis and comes of age during a High. They often serve as foot soldiers for the Heroes but also, through their works, begin to inspire the next generation of Prophets. Read William Whyte’s *The Organization Man* (1956) or Alan Harrington’s *Life in the Crystal Palace* (1959). Or Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road* (1957), one of the defining novels of the Beat Generation which preceded the hippies. The oldest of the upcoming generation of Artists are in their teens. They will come of age during the next High.

When Strauss and Howe wrote *The Fourth Turning*, the country was eyeball-deep in an Unraveling: NAFTA, the unending Clinton scandals, the credit-fueled tech bubble, the so-called culture wars, growing anxiety about international terrorism, etc. Strauss and Howe predicted that something nasty would end the

Unraveling. Their timetable suggested it would happen within five years. On September 11, 2001, the Twin Towers fell. Media regaled us for days with images of the burning towers.

However one interprets those attacks, the mood of the country changed dramatically. A Crisis shakes national identity as events play out. The nation emerges changed, redefined, with new goals and new values. The stage is set for the next High.

Are these cycles real? Begin with 9/11 and go back 72 years. What do you find? The Crash of '29, which ended the so-called Jazz Age portrayed in such classics as *The Great Gatsby* (1925) by F. Scott Fitzgerald, a Nomad born during the early Progressive era (an Awakening). Go back another 69 years. We encounter South Carolina's Ordinance of Secession (December 1860), the opening salvo that set conditions for the bloodiest war ever fought on U.S. soil: a Crisis in any sense of that term. By the time it was resolved, original federalism involving dual sovereignty and states' rights was dead. The cycle before that began following the battle over the Constitution's acceptability and eventual ratification (1791).

Thus the most recent High in the U.S. began with start of the post-war boom (1947-48) and ended with the Kennedy assassination (1963). My six-year-old mind knew something dreadful had happened to the country. The ensuing Awakening continued for perhaps 20 years, into the Reagan era. The country had been through a lot: the campus rebellion and aftermath, the disastrous conflict in Southeast Asia, Watergate, the Iranian revolution / hostage crisis, and more. But the idealism that took root during the 1960s was still around and had transformed a lot of minds and lives. This was true across the political spectrum. One saw a firmly entrenched academic left, but also the libertarian movement and resurgent conservatism.

In the early 1980s, that is, it was "morning in America." But what became clear with 20/20 hindsight was that we'd entered a

period of national drift. Conservatism, Ronald Reagan notwithstanding, lost its identity; by the mid-1990s leaders of those who self-identified as conservative had few ideas what they wanted to conserve, aside from abstractions like "family values" and the U.S. as the "exceptional nation." An Unraveling is a period of great change.

Some of the changes may be good: the tech revolution and the Internet.

Others are not so good: this era also gave rise to Clintonism and a war machine that rivaled anything the Soviet Union had come up with – willing to impose "liberal democracy" on the rest of the world by force so global corporations could make billions.

According to one account, the last Unraveling came to a screeching halt with 9/11. Other who conduct Fourth Turning discussions hold out for the Meltdown of 2008 as the beginning of the ensuing Crisis. I prefer the former, as we clearly crossed a threshold that day, but see no point in starting an internecine war over the matter.

Everyone who studies this agrees: we have been in a severe Crisis for a sufficiently long period of time that resolution, one way or another, is imminent!

Thus we come to the Donald Trump victory, and the Trumpist brand of economic and cultural rebellion against globalism, elitism generally, and political correctness.

It is important to note that the Strauss-and-Howe version of recent history is only partially deterministic. The cycles and patterns of turnings may be fixed, but not the specifics. A given turning might be similar economically to its ancestor 70-odd years before, but otherwise sharing little by way of mood.

The Crisis of the 1930s, the Great Depression, retained a sense of optimism because the people were still basically

Christian. Some suffered terribly, but God was in charge. Anyone who doubts this need only listen to the upbeat big band music and swing that was popular during that era. The present Crisis has occurred in a country secularized and turned materialist during preceding turnings – and gone nihilistic. No one is “in charge.” We inhabit a violent world in a dead universe. Listen to our gangsta-rap, heavy metal, or Goth rock, or note how many rock stars have either died young (often from drug overdoses) or committed suicide (Ian Curtis, Kurt Cobain).

Nothing guarantees that the cycles and turnings will continue indefinitely. A sufficiently destructive war would put an end to the whole shebang in one fell swoop. Still larger discernable civilizational cycles suggest that the pattern Strauss and Howe claim to have discovered is only temporary.

There are no guarantees, that is, that our present Crisis will end well. It depends on what Donald Trump does in office, who he surrounds himself with, whether or not the resulting administration is able to function amidst the hostility presently coming from the alliance of globalists, so-called progressives, and corporate media types, and how much it can accomplish.

I can envision two conceivable scenarios.

One: Trump continues to confound the “experts.” He confounded them by winning the GOP nomination and then the presidency. Some who worked for Trump believe that his administration could lead an economic renaissance. A friend of mine wrote from my former home state of South Carolina:

“... I am of the opinion that our economy has been depressed, just barely above flatline for the past ten years, in spite of running the printing presses. I think the economic policies outlined by President-Elect Trump will create lots of good paying middle class jobs. Particularly if he follows through with deporting aliens, cutting the corporate tax rate, and

renegotiating trade deals. Once the middle class has employment security again, there is a HUGE pent-up demand for consumer goods, including houses and cars, that people have been deferring because of ten years of economic hard times. I see a real boom. If the boom happens based on private sector money, and real demand, as opposed to government subsidies and printing presses, it will be an actual boom, not just an artificial bubble. Allowing American energy production will turn much of the U.S. into a Williston, N.D. style boom town. Get rid of Obamacare mandates and employers will be ready to hire again.”

This, of course, is predicated both on Trump being able to govern and people’s being ready and able to go back to work. Is Trump truly independent or not? The relentless attacks by so-called progressives and via corporate media surely suggest so. So-called progressives on college and university campuses are increasingly embarrassing themselves with their “cry ins” and counseling sessions since the election. Academics were blindsided because with few exceptions they’ve been living in a leftist echo chamber, talking only to each other, as with elite media based in big cities.

The latter are launching a rearguard action against “fake news” sites (Breitbart.com, Infowars.com, Drudge, your host here, etc.), i.e., trying to reclaim their territory now that this election has seriously damaged their credibility – an effort hardly helped by their lunatic notion that “the Russians did it!” Think about it: despite the most blatant media bias we have ever seen, pollsters who consistently put Hillary Clinton in the lead, countless “experts” who said she would win in a landslide, and attacks from within his own party, Trump won! “Alternative,” Internet-based media promoted him, along the way debunking the nonsense about his “racism,” his “sexual assaults on women,” his “ties to the Russians,” etc. It has become increasingly clear that mainstream media, over 90% of which is controlled by six leviathan corporations

all in bed with globalism, is filled with overpaid empty suits and is propped up by consumer habit, propaganda, celebrity titillation, the wealth of its owners, and very little else.

Should Trump bring about the desired business renaissance amidst a new spirit of nationalism and a repudiation of PC rubbish, the stage will be set for one kind of High.

The second scenario isn't as optimistic. Brandon Smith has argued at length (here, here, here, here, and here, with abundant other relevant analysis on the same site), that despite all this, those I call the superelite wanted, and planned for, a Trump victory. In this case, all of us including yours truly were fooled. We made the assumption that a Trump victory would damage the globalist cause and so would not be allowed; Hillary was their woman. But according to Smith, she was not their choice, he was. If this sounds crazy, consider: (1) Despite her connections and support, it is possible the globalists were never at ease with Hillary Clinton because of her obvious egotism and arrogance, the likelihood that she and her husband would use her presidency to pad their wealth and promote their foundation rather than serve superelite goals; her clear recklessness and dishonesty; ongoing scandals sure to mar her presidency and distract from what they wanted done; her explosive temper; and her predilection to provoke Russia for no good reason, a predilection clearly still in evidence.

Smith's argument: (2) globalists despise "populists" as loudmouthed, inferior rabble, and have seen at least two golden opportunities this year to set them up. The first was Brexit; the second was the Trump victory. Smith argues that they will allow "conservative populism" room to breathe across the northern hemisphere, perhaps for a year to a year and a half, and then pull the plug on Western house-of-cards economies, especially Great Britain and the U.S. propped up by money printing and creditors' blind faith. The British collapse, possibly spreading to the EU itself, will be blamed

on Brexit, while the U.S. tailspin is blamed on Trump. Elite-controlled media and academia will contend that the reason the economic and financial worlds collapsed was that “populists” have no grasp of economics and hence no idea what they are doing. I have acquaintances in academia who are already sounding this conditioned response, calling Trump “incompetent,” a “buffoon,” when not reciting the usual litany (“racism, sexism,” etc.). Trump cannot, after all, single-handedly, by sheer force of will, build his economic renaissance without the cooperation of many others who – in this scenario, anyway – are only feigning loyalty to his success.

The economic uptick of the two weeks following the election (the Dow’s surge, a stronger dollar, etc.) might well lend support to this idea. These suggest that big business is happy with Trump. The idea here is that the superelite is taking a step back in preparation for a large leap forward, while supplying us plenty of bread and circuses in the form of campus protests and attempts to undercut the Electoral College. These will prove futile: the former, as we noted, are only embarrassing themselves; the latter would open an unprecedented legal and constitutional Pandora’s Box.

The Crisis, in this case, will culminate when the plug gets pulled, the “global economy” tanks as hundreds of billions in fiat money simply disappear back into the nothingness from which they came, and controlled mainstream media blames Trump and other “populists” and “economic nationalists.” The superelite doubtless hope this will utterly demoralize the “deplorables,” Trump’s white working class and former middle class supporters, as all they had hoped for will disintegrate in front of their eyes.

Then the superelites and their cadre of technocratic “experts” will ride to the rescue, which will come with powerful strings attached. Full recovery will require full-fledged, masks-off and gloves-off globalism: global economy via “free trade”



deals such as a revived TPP; world government via the unaccountable organizations such deals create, likely to include a new global reserve currency replacing the dollar, and a global tax (something the UN has been pushing for years); national borders reduced to lines on maps, for the purposes of instigated mass migrations which will further demolish white, achievement-oriented, Western and Christian culture; a global "spirituality," perhaps, intended to end Christian predominance; control over information, which will mean control over the Internet and a forced shutting down of websites demonized as "fake news"; finally, unbridled media and academic demonizing of the "populism" / nationalism / sovereignty / Christian white male "supremacy" axes, all as "causes" of the preceding chaos.

The next High begins as corporation-controlled world government is installed and its central banks flood the world with investment money – the new global currency. Its institutions will demand – and receive – totalitarian surveillance and dominance over populations with no other live options.

Those of us writing for sites like this one will be forced to go underground. I imagine some of us will end up living out our lives and then dying in extreme poverty.

Goes without saying, I very much pray to God that Brandon Smith's scenario is wrong. But every prediction he's made for this year, he's gotten right.

Once it begins in earnest (2020?), the next High may continue for a time comparable to the last one, which lasted from 1948 to 1963 (15 years), or until around 2035 (?).

The future depends on which of these scenarios ensues: a successful economic and cultural renaissance under a Trump administration, or globalism returning with hurricane force.

We must do our part now to bring about the former, by (among

other things) exposing this nonsense about “fake news” on the Internet; continuing debunking bogus “hate speech” and “hate crimes” blamed on Trump or his supporters; and above all, refusing to be intimidated by robotic allegations of “racism, sexism, xenophobia, homophobia, transphobia, Islamophobia,” the whole litany of weaponized words used to demonize.

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