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An out-of-touch elite; angry working class led to Trump victory: Singapore-based election watchers



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SINGAPORE - Donald Trump's shock victory over Hillary Clinton is an indictment of how out of touch the American elite is with the rest of the country, seasoned election watchers here said on Wednesday.

His path to the White House was also paved with the widespread discontentment of working-class America who felt it had reaped none of the benefits of globalisation but all of its consequences, they added.

"It shows you how out of touch America's elite is, and Hillary, unfortunately, represents the elites of America," said Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy dean Kishore Mahbubani.



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"The 1 per cent she works with has benefited so much from globalisation, but they don't understand how that same globalisation had made life difficult for a lot of people in the working class, who haven't seen their lives improve, and there's been no empathy for them."

Agreeing, former ambassador to the US Chan Heng Chee said Mr Trump had managed to tap into this deep-seated feeling, which many election watchers and analysts had underestimated.

"The message for me from this election is that there is a whole group of people who are left behind, who want radical, major change in America," said Prof Chan, who chairs the Lee Kuan Yew Centre for Innovative Cities.

"One commentator said this is a 'whitelash' in America. Put another way, it's to make America white again...and this message drove him to victory."

With President-elect Trump in office, the odds of passing the globe-spanning Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade pact are virtually zero, they said.

But ambassador-at-large Tommy Koh said he holds out hope that, like Ronald Reagan before him, Donald Trump will be able to govern from the centre and "surround himself with experienced and competent people", even though he had run a very hard-right campaign.

"Having lived more than 20 years in America, the lesson I've learnt is that campaign rhetoric is campaign rhetoric; it doesn't necessarily translate into policy," said Prof Koh, who is Rector of Tembusu College.

"Once you are put in the seat of government, it makes you sober, it makes you much more thoughtful, rational, and careful.

"I'm hoping that President Trump will be a very different person than candidate Trump."

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