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Subject: Week 149 learnings - where does the US go from here?

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Dear All,

I am picking a few lessons from what I have seen and heard and read about the US elections. I have seen the news and read all the articles on CNN, Fox News, BBC, NYT, WSJ and the FT in coming to these points.

### **About Joe Biden:**

1. Biden was the 5th youngest senator in US senate history, he became a senator in 1972. He is a 6-term senator. Lesson: Persistence pays.
2. He has consistently worked with opponents to get a middle of the road answer. He is a collaborator and he believes in building bridges, a key trait to have as a leader. Lesson: Friends are permanent, opponents are temporary.
3. He lost his family when a tractor trailer rammed into his car. He lost his wife and brought up his two sons. He recovered from it but he thought of suicide at some point. When he was Vice President, he lost his son to brain cancer!! Lesson: Overcoming personal tragedy is tough and builds character.
4. He ran for President three times in 1988, 2008 and now in 2020. He was Obama's VP pick and served Obama for 8 years as VP. Here's a lesson for most people: you cannot be a good leader if you are not a great follower.
5. He made a brave pick of Kamala Harris as his VP. This was only the third time that a woman was on the ticket. It was a positive and progressive move. Lesson: Be bold
6. I like one of his expressions: "Faith sees best in the dark". What gets people through tough times is belief in a higher cause and faith in a higher power. Lesson: there is light at the end of the tunnel.
7. When Trump caught Covid, Biden didn't rib him on that. He wished Trump speedy recovery and stopped all negative ads. That's decency in a situation where most people would have poured gasoline on the fire. Lesson: Difficult times bring out the best leaders.
8. Leadership doesn't have to be fiery and flamboyant, but it does need to be courageous and mentally tough; Biden displays this.

### **About President Trump**

1. President Trump has his own set of supporters and detractors. To his supporters he can do no wrong and to his detractors he can do no right. His behaviour right now will be watched minutely.
2. It is often said that one must be humble in victory and gracious in defeat. President Trump has done the opposite - he was bragging in victory in 2016 and complaining/sulking in defeat in 2020.
3. The big three 2020 election issues were the economy, Covid and racial equality. Trump results on the economy have been good, a continuation of the run from the Obama growth years. President Trump will hurt his own legacy with his behavior. This happens with many senior managers when they leave their roles, they feel it's their right to have the role and start behaving badly the day they don't have the role.
4. The head of a country or institution or company must uphold what that institution stands for. By complaining about the fairness of the election process, President Trump is hurting American image first and his next. The irony is that here is a country, which read the riot act on elections

4. and election results to dictators in Latin America and Africa! America said that because its democratic institutions were above suspicion.
5. President Trump has a number of state cases against him. He no longer enjoys immunity. His behavior will hurt him, lawyers or no lawyers.
6. I think most people are in a “expect the worst, hope for the best” from President Trump and his behavior right now.

### **USA looking ahead:**

1. The country is as divided as it can ever be. Polarization is complete! It will be an impossible target for President elect Biden to bring it together. Even if succeeds in moving the needle, it will be a miracle.
2. What happens to the wall? What happens to Russia? What happens to Kim? What happens to Iran? What happens to Germany? These are all tough issues when they become an individual agenda and not an institutional agenda. There are lessons for leaders in every company on this.
3. What happens to the relations with Europe? The Paris Mayor tweeted “Welcome back America” after Biden won. Obama told UK that they would be last in line if UK exited Brexit, so, what happens now? UK was banking on a strong deal with the US!
4. President elect Biden has signaled a return to the Paris agreement. This is good for sustainability.
5. Obamacare will move ahead now, after the speed breaker in the last four years.
6. What happens to the Republican Party? Who will stand up and be counted for what’s right and what’s fair? There is a lesson for all of us. When there is something wrong in a company and senior managers, very few people stand up, even though they know what’s going on. The Republican Party and its leaders face the same situation. They have to make a departure one day, I don’t know when. The country which taught the world the concept of checks and balances has lost it itself. One-man armies and one-man companies are only in movies – Rambo style, they don’t last in real life.
7. What happens to Fox News? They gained a lot when President Trump tweeted their news and Fox news covered all of his tweets. Their commercial business model will be challenged now.

There is no doubt that America is at the crossroads; both its leaders and citizens have to unite if America has to be seen as a country with ideals and values, a country where truth and transparency matter, a country with hope and promise. America has produced great leaders in the past, they need to produce a few now, for their sake.

Feedback welcome!!

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