

*The New York Times*, and the news industry in general, has failed miserably in providing the public with an in depth analysis of the root cause of this disastrous upcoming election. That failure is a direct result of the fact that we conflate the idea of democracy with the institution of election. Our counterproductive foreign policy illustrates one of the consequences of this mistake. We invade other nations to “make them free”, throw out the regime, throw up an election, and call it a democracy. This policy has always failed in the long run. There are many obvious faults with the institution of election, but the most important one is that it will always achieve a corrupt result because it is inherently corruptible. It simply cannot be fixed.

A more important reason for your failure to provide this analysis is that you are a large part of the problem. The news industry is one participant in the ecological synergy of electoral pathology. Look at all the entities that make their living off the institution of election. In addition to your paper and the news industry there are the polling organizations, the advertising industry, the political parties, the entertainment industry, the so called think tanks, the legal profession, political science departments at our colleges and universities, the lobbying industry, the manufacturers of voting machines and accessories, computer technicians, and the politicians themselves and their campaign staffs. There is a synergy among all these organizations which, in addition to wasting valuable energy and resources, is destructive of citizenship. Citizenship, properly understood, is the means through which we politically resolve the inherent tension between the interests of the individual and the community. In the pages of your paper, however, the only reference to citizenship is in the context of immigration or the birther conspiracy theory.

We live in a commercial society in which everything is seen as a business. Since you are stuck in a business paradigm, you interact with your readers as consumers rather than as citizens. Since reporting on elections is an important profit center for your enterprise, you owe it to your readers to provide us with a financial statement that shows us the percentage of your national news budget that is devoted to elections and what percentage of your profit is derived there from. A metaphor for a well ordered government is a smooth running operating system. It keeps the system secure, it is transparent and runs in the background, it allows the applications on the system to do what they are designed to do without interfering with one another, and it is adaptable to new conditions. In short, it is boring. There is no incentive for your paper to report that which is boring. You are obviously motivated to constantly report on polling results and the proclivities of the candidates in great detail, but unfortunately you have no incentive to critically analyze an institution that greatly enhances your revenue stream.

No matter how this election turns out, the results will be disastrous and long lasting. The implications of this outcome have been obscured by the fact that process has also been entertaining. The important point is that all this entertainment has absolutely nothing to do with actual governance. I have been a long time subscriber to your paper which is an important source of information. However, I now find myself reading the election coverage for its entertainment value because this election has no substantive content. Your paper is not at fault for reporting the absurdities of this election because that is part of your job. But you could also enlighten us with an investigative report on the source of these absurdities which arise out of the institution of election itself.