The New Populism

From Noah Rothman at Commentary, The Age of Emotion and Unreason

> *The elites and experts in whom society has placed its trust have underperformed over the last decade. This phenomenon was discussed at length in the latest COMMENTARY podcast. In virtually every sector of rarified society, the failure of the managerial class to pass basic competency tests is endemic. There is, however, another side to that coin—a side that isn't often discussed in an era of anti-elitism, in which the professed ability to channel the primal nature of the angry American voter is a prized commodity. It is the fact that the angry American voter is an emotional animal, and emotionality leads to bad policy. Too many have confused displays of pique and pride for intellectual argument.*
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> *At the moment, America's intellectual class is transfixed by a forensic investigation into the present backlash against the political class in Washington. The risk of over-interpreting the results of an election in which one unpopular candidate managed to best another by fewer than 200,000 votes in three key swing states has been subsumed in the race to catalog the genus #MAGA. This mission has recently transformed, though, from the necessary enterprise of identifying the causes that led to a reaction against a comfortable class on the coasts into an effort to impose on this movement a kind of intellectualism absent in the actions and pronouncements of its standard-bearer.*
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> *The task of making America's new nationalism into something of substance has become a preoccupation of both by Trump skeptics and supporters. But the fact that so many on the intellectual right are laboriously crafting a rationale for "America First" abroad and "economic nationalism" at home*

is an admission that no such rationale exists. These aren't policies but sentiments—and not unearned sentiments, either. The noble, angry American voter may be a righteously aggrieved figure, but that doesn't mean he knows much about public policy.