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November 6, 2014: An Election of Anxiety

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Title: An Election of Anxiety

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11/6/2014—The results of Tuesday's mid-term election were surprising. Who expected Democrats to do that badly and who could explain why a moderate Republican governor in Pennsylvania was trounced? I heard an analysis on NPR on Wednesday morning that Republicans had succeeded in turning voters' attention away from the economy, where there had been improvement, to issues of competence in government, such as ISIS and Ebola. Republicans would dispute the first part of this analysis. There was no need to turn voters away from the economy because, as President Obama's poll numbers show, he does not get credit for a recovery that has left out most people. But there is something to the issue of competence, though that word is too meek. Americans today fear that bad things are happening generally. The inability of the government to protect us, from the Secret Service failures, to Ebola, to dark forces in the Middle East beheading Americans, feeds these fears. The world is a frightening place. In this analysis, the election was decided a few weeks ago, in the midst of the Ebola panic. I am here challenging the liberal refrain that last minute Republican money decided things. That money just made matters worse. In this analysis, President Obama really did deserve the poor showing he caused. The President's policies are actually quite reasonable and have been effective. But he was not at all reassuring during the last few months. In a dangerous world, he did not seem to know what was going on. That, rather than Republican policies, seems to me to be the takeaway from this election.