WASHINGTON, DC November 10: US. President Barack Obama(R) shakes hands with President-elect Donald Trump(L) following a meeting in the Oval Office November 10, 2016 in Washington DC. Trump is scheduled to meet with members of the Republican leadership in Congress later today on Capitol Hill. McNamee, Win. “93340383.” Getty Images, Getty Images North America, 10 Nov. 2016, www.gettyimages.com/license/622153368

President Obama Meets With President-Elect Donald Trump In The Oval Office Of The White House.(Mcnamee)
The passing on of power can be a bittersweet moment for leaders, more so when it is passed to your opposition. The leaders President Obama and the Democrats, the opposition Donald Trump and the Republican party. The photo was taken by Win McNamee inside of the White House on November 10th 2016. The photo shows President Barack Obama shaking hands with the president-elect Donald Trump. It was taken following a meeting in the Oval Office and pictured is the press proceedings afterwards. This event had substantial news coverage surrounding it, as would any meeting of this caliber. I reversed searched the image on google and it took me back to Getty Images where I was able to find the photographer, date and time of the photograph.

The picture is taken from a high angle and is a long shot relative to the space available in the room. While the high angle is mostly used to give the message of the main character being small or beneath the viewer, in the picture it does the opposite and gives the characters in the picture the power. The high angle in this picture shows how much attention and importance that the two main characters have because of the many cameras and reporters focused on them. There is repetition seen with the many microphones cameras and reporters in the shot. The photo has good balance as it is centered and symmetrical with no oblique angles. The reason for this balance may be to shed light on how two equal parties are at war and meeting here in this picture. As with most news photos there is no changes in lighting or color. Emphasis is placed in the Presidents as well as juxtaposition in highlighting the facial expressions of them.

Given the focal point of the picture being a handshake, an otherwise sign of trust and unity, how does this photojournalists' photograph represent the actual state of relations between two opposing forces, the Democratic and Republican parties. In reality the photo represents how two parties will conform in order to influence or change the public’s perception of them. When thinking about the two parties one must ask why they are at odds in the first place. The
most notable battle between the two began due to the right to own slaves. With southern states fearing the loss of economic gain caused by the loss of the slaves. And today the remnants of this can still be seen. This division has become much more refined while keeping hints of its racial undertones. In fact in a survey done by Nolan McCarty, Keith T. Poole and Howard Rosenthal it was found that, "Family income, a southern location, and college attendance are correlated with more conservative scores, whereas African-American and Hispanic constituents and college degrees lead to more liberal scores"(McCarty, Poole, & Rosenthal 2016). So there is indeed a racial factor that influences political choices. But aside from race there’s also the factors of demographic and economic backgrounds that provide a correlation with increased political polarization. All of which make each party inherently “marked”. The phrase was coined by Deborah Tannen and means adding meaning or insight to something that would otherwise be meaningless or not intended to do so. Most may think that people of lower economic status would sway towards to the Republican side but this is not the case. They've also found the trend of, “the higher the income, the more republican the outcome”(McCarty, Poole, & Rosenthal 2016). This may be due to the fact high income voters have received ample economic gain in recent years in the form of Republican politicians offering tax cuts.

While there are plenty differences between the two parties, there is also great disparity between President Obama and Donald Trump. Kenneth Levine gives us an insightful view of each presidents campaign, mainly their story which can be used to show why these two men also show indifference and in what specific ways. Donald Trump hails from a real estate empire in which he started his company when his father loaned him $1 million. He then expanded his company, and he is currently a multibillionaire. He has been a media icon ever since his best selling book, “The Art of a Deal.”and staring in reality TV. He has never ran in office and has no political experience. While there are some positives to this, “He has a business background and
has a questionable resume for a presidential candidate. (Levine, Kenneth 2017). News outlets at the time like NBC news say that, “Trump may have the new title of president-elect, but he’s still plugging his old gig as the head of a massive business empire. …More than one-quarter of Trump’s bio refers to his business properties around the world.” (Bruggeman, Karyn 2017). But because of Trump’s marking as being a reality star businessman, he was able to successfully run for president of the United States. However one might say that Obama is the total opposite when it comes to background stories. Obama’s having an almost “Rags to Riches” tone throughout. The former president was poor growing up and did not have a relationship with his father. He decided to go to Harvard Law pursuing a Phd. and later his parents divorced. Obama even, “struggled to deal with his multiracial heritage. He felt neglected due to the fact that he did not have a close relationship with his father. He became a US senator working to help unite his community”(Levine, Kenneth 2017). Because of his marking of African American, it took him more time to pass his legislations when he eventually became the First African American President.

After reviewing the history of both parties and both presidents one can clearly discern that is indeed no trust and unity between the two. In fact the photo fails at showing the viewer that this disparity between the two parties is still alive and well today in these more sensitive times. however it is because the outlets like NBC news that we are able to learn the stories about and actually find out who our Presidents are. The presence and effect that White House reporters and press have to influence certain aspects of Presidencies and elections can’t be understated. Media was first taken seriously in the Eisenhower administration when television was recognized as a presidential resource. Presidents use networks and news organizations to spread president’s brands, goals and objectives. In today’s climate it is almost impossible to be elected or run without being a public figure who can be seen and accessed on various media
outlets. Media presence has increased throughout the years and this can be attributed to
President's, “relationship with news organizations, viewing the media as a resource and as a
source of pressure”(Kumar 2003). On a typical event day in the White House today, there can
be 10 to 15 photographers at the forefront alongside around 20 cameramen. These reporters
mainly focus on sound bites and the Presidents answers to their questions. In situations like the
meeting of two Presidents, the reporters are called in and a, "pool represents the interest of all
reporters.’ Because there is not sufficient room to bring in all reporters covering the White
House, news organizations in a sense "pool" their resources and have a small group represent
them in such sessions”(Kumar 2003). The presence of these highly trained and motivated
media personnel adds a high amount of pressure and a lot of times causes the people being
focused on to act differently than they normally would.

Like the strong impact that press can have, social media is a extension to this and can
even take this a step further. Photojournalism and social media can also be very strong
determining factors in elections. With over two-thirds of the US population having a profile on
one or more social networking sites, citizens fully utilize these sites for other uses as well. In
fact, “a substantial proportion of users around the world rely on these sites in order to discuss
politics and to consume news”(Florian Justwan, Bert Baumgaertner, Juliet E. Carlisle, April K.
Clark & Michael Clark 2018). Even in the 2016 election, Facebook was said to have influenced
the election by giving away millions of people’s personal information and having ads that gave
out misleading false information. Apart from rear cases like these, social media is more
commonly used to sway voters’ political opinions and view of parties. For example in a study
done by Florian Justwan, Bert Baumgaertner, Juliet E. Carlisle, April K. Clark & Michael Clark it
was found that social media presence, “boost democratic satisfaction among Republicans but
they do not have an effect on system support by self-identified Democrats.”(Florian Justwan,
Bert Baumgaertner, Juliet E. Carlisle, April K. Clark & Michael Clark 2018). So in essence social media presence helps Democrats convert Republicans but the same effect can't be seen with Republicans converting Democrats.

Photojournalism comes into play when pictures are circulated throughout social without any context, leaving it up to the viewer to decipher what is being depicted and even remove the obvious markedness held by the two. When this misconception between what is really going on as opposed to what is being portrayed is present, false opinions and views are created. When in fact the photo actually shows how the press and social media beguiled the public to believe that the two parties are closer than they are and that things between them can actually work out.
References:


