

# Does Donald come up Trumps?

## School of thought

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I MUST confess I have a problem. I have been finding it difficult to go to sleep in the past few weeks without doing something that I have counselled hundreds of teenagers not to do. The flickering of iPads, smartphones and laptops stimulates the brain, negatively impacting on its ability to begin its sleep cycle.

I can only go to sleep after, much to my wife's annoyance, searching for the latest Donald Trump news clip. As a history and philosophy teacher, I have a natural interest in politics but my fascination with "The Donald" is unbridled.

He is a man who breaks the rules of politics. The more misogynist, xenophobic, jingoistic and aggressive he becomes, the more popular he becomes. Whereas showmanship that crosses the line from proposing a political position to gratuitous Hollywood entertainment would normally switch off voters, Trump is widening and enthusing the Republican base.

Within the Republican ranks, large sections of the Hispanic community are supporting him, despite his desire to build a wall between the US and Mexico, deport Mexican "rapists" and deny birthright citizenship to thousands of immigrant children. He claims support from the educated and the uneducated ("I love the uneducated" he told an adoring crowd) and in almost every section of the voting population, he is defying traditional political rules.

So what is going on? And, as we always ask, Is this good for the Jews?

The achievements of the Obama administration have been many – an economy that could have collapsed but was saved, reduction of the fiscal deficit from over nine per cent of GDP to under three per cent in 2014, an extension of healthcare to millions that in any equivalently rich country would have been a right decades ago, the extension of childcare to working

families, a climate that saw the Supreme Court support same-sex marriage. Obama also attempted (but failed in the face of an intransigent Congress) to curb the gun culture and close Guantanamo Bay. All of these things have improved America, but the hype and expectation of the Obama machine (its crowning slogans were "Yes We Can" and "Hope") is gone.

What is going on is actually quite simple. Having emerged from the global recession, with the banking institutions that were so unpopular now back with a vengeance, America is reflecting on its dreams. The American Dream tells Americans that with hard work and opportunity, they can be successful. They, too, can share in the lifestyle that Donald, Ivana and their family 'braggadociously' (a Trump-ism) enjoy. Yet with the collapse of industry, the stagnation of real estate, the new challenges in raising loans and the growth of the low wage and casual working economy, Americans are fed up.

The best hope for the future, given the present situation, is for the only other credible centrist presidential candidate, Hillary Clinton, to establish a broad coalition.

Trump is tuning into this frustration and his rejection of mainstream morals, modus operandi and conventions are enthusing people. His wealth is inspiring them. Whilst other politicians talk about foreign policy tweaks, tax adjustments and employment programs, Trump is agitating them with broad statements that resonate with popular anger.

Is this good for the Jews? On face value, it would appear so. He has accused the Obama administration of "Selling Israel out" and says of Israel that "They've always been there for us and we should be there for them". On another occasion he declared that "We love Israel. We will fight for Israel

100 per cent, 1000 per cent. It will be there forever."

As ever with Trump, it is important to scratch below the soundbite. This is a man who would have a "total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States". Who's next, to paraphrase Niemoller? Jews are not in favour of blanket travel bans based on ethnicity or religion.

This is a man who, faced with hecklers, suggested that they should be "carried out on a stretcher, folks", just like the old days. In Las Vegas he told the crowd (to huge applause) that "I'd like to punch him in the face".

This does not sit well with our community. We are the people of the book, not of the clenched fist.

Still, as a previous Republican Secretary of State is famously supposed to have said of the Jews, "they don't vote for us anyway."

In Trump's case, he is right. Jews will not vote for him en masse.

The best hope for the future, given the present situation, is for the only other credible centrist presidential candidate, Hillary Clinton, to establish a broad coalition. Faced with a Trump Republican candidacy, might mainstream Republicans abstain or switch? This may not simply put another Clinton in the White House but it may also change the balance of power in Congress. Those abandoning the Republicans may also abandon their Republican representatives in Congress. This may result in breaking the deadlock, freeing up an opportunity to actually get things done: address education on a federal level, extend health care further, refashion the tax system, end the power of "pork" in Washington and govern for America, rather than for a narrow interest.

So my fascination with Trump remains. On a personal level I thank him for providing pre-sleep entertainment after a busy day. But on a global scale, the only positive that I can see is that he polarises and disenfranchises to such an extent that an alternative is elected who can get things done.

God bless America!

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