

What the media missed: if not Donald Trump, it would be another

By Maurice Newman, The Australian, 10 March 2016

What an indictment of the mainstream media the Donald Trump phenomenon is. How is it possible to so misunderstand the mood of the American people? How could they miss the obvious? Perhaps when your opinions are formed in an echo chamber and you allow blind prejudice to substitute for serious reflection, it's not really surprising.

What the mainstream media misses is that a very large number of Americans, and especially Trump supporters, have had enough of the establishment's political dynasties.

They reject political correctness, illegal migration and the crony capitalists who use Wall Street to make a fortune at their expense, particularly when their incomes are basically frozen. They believe the government manipulates the unemployment numbers and, as they struggle to find and hold permanent jobs, they know welfare cheats and disability fraudsters are gaming the system with impunity. They see government waste everywhere and think Obamacare is a failure. They resent President Barack Obama's condescending lectures and his use of moral equivalence when comparing Islam to Christianity.

A very large number of Americans are mad as hell

American political scientist Charles Murray says: "The central truth of Trumpism is that the entire working class has legitimate reasons to be angry at the ruling class." He warns that, even if Trump doesn't win the nomination, "don't kid yourself that it, (Trumpism) will fade away. It is the endgame that has been going on for half a century."

America's enduring exceptionalism rests on foundations of egalitarianism, liberty and individualism. Author Samuel Huntington calls it "the American Creed", from which flows equality before the law, equality of opportunity, freedom of speech and association, self-reliance, limited government, free-market economics and decentralised and devolved public authority. He thinks the creed has lost its "authority and substance". Why? Because too many liberties have been surrendered to those trusted to protect them and the people now feel powerless and betrayed.

Of all the candidates, Trump understands this

He is anti-establishment and someone the establishment can't control. He says: "We are tired of being led by stupid people." He doesn't care what his critics think. Having been mocked for his appeal to the poorly educated, he said after a resounding win in Nevada: "We won with the highly educated. We won with the poorly educated. I love the poorly educated! They are the smartest people, the most loyal people." No wonder 20,000 Democrats in Massachusetts have left the party and 3500 have switched to Republicans for Trump.

French political thinker Alexis de Tocqueville saw 1830s America as a place "where the more opulent citizens take great care not to stand aloof from the people".

The 21st-century nobility

Not any more. The 21st-century nobility is more reminiscent of 18th and 19th-century Russia, when the language spoken in high society was not Russian but French. Today, the language of the ruling classes is just as incomprehensible to the masses.

As the philosophical difference between the two major political parties fades to grey, Trump remains black and white. He speaks the language of the people. Trump gets their anger and frustration at being marginalised financially, socially and politically.

They are belatedly waking up to the reality expressed by Greg Richards in *American Thinker* that, after two generations, Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci's aim to capture American culture by a "long march through the institutions" is complete. "Liberalism controls the debate in the public space," he says. "Republicans have had neither the skill nor the intestinal fortitude — the courage — to operate outside the culturally dominant liberal paradigm."

This is why Trump is the hope of the side

He is not a conservative, nor is he of the Left. Some of his rhetoric is xenophobic and racist. Yet he appeals to Hispanics. He also wins the support of blue-collar workers, highly educated professionals and evangelicals: in fact, almost every group, bar the ruling coalition of big government, big business and big labour. The Republican nomination now seems within his grasp. He will likely go head-to-head with Hillary Clinton in November (assuming she is not undone by a criminal inquiry).

Trump can be expected to tone down his rhetoric. He is remaking his image. He promises to be a uniter. To cement this claim and broaden his appeal he will choose a respected running mate who can negotiate with congress and the Senate. New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, former house Speaker Newt Gingrich or retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson are favoured by pundits.

With Trump in the White House, the world would be a different place; some would argue more dangerous. The global community will find him very unlike his predecessor, indeed unlike any president since Ronald Reagan. He is likely to rethink many policies advocated by Obama, especially on health, climate change, immigration and Islam. Internationally, America will become withdrawn and, in forums such as the G20, US-centric.

Reverberations from his administration certainly will be felt in Canberra. Just as the Left takes advantage of the Obama White House, the Right will gain strength from president Trump. Notwithstanding protests from the Left, the practical implication of his domestic and international policy shifts will bring pressure on others to change their positions.

It is about the deep resentment

Failed Republican nominee Mitt Romney may call Trump a fraud, as the establishment desperately tries to derail his campaign. But, scoff as they will, Trumpism is more than The Donald. It is about the deep resentment so many Americans feel towards once trusted institutions that they now blame for weakening their nation's exceptionalism. Trump is on the scene, but if it isn't him it will be someone else.

We should ponder the likelihood of Australians empathising with their American cousins and the possibility of a Trump moment next time we go to the ballot box.