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OUR VIEW

Trump's success shouldn't surprise or scare us

Many Americans are bemoaning a country that has Donald Trump atop the polls of a major political party in a presidential election.

That his ideas and rhetoric become more and more destructive, and are followed by no corresponding loss of support, has surprised and scared plenty of people.

Is it possible that a self-obsessed xenophobe with no political experience, who doesn't believe in religious freedom and wants to build a "big, beautiful" wall around the country could be elected president?

Well, no.

That's why we would like to address everyone who has been driven to Trump-induced anxiety. Take a deep breath, relax. Drink some tea, go for a walk. Donald Trump has no chance of becoming president of the United States.

Currently, he is the strong leader of a wide-open Republican primary.

Although some competitors have dropped out, there are still more than a dozen candidates currently splitting the vote. That is to Trump's advantage. Because there is little policy difference between Marco Rubio and Jeb! Bush and John Kasich, they split their votes based on geography and personality.

Say what you want about him, but no one is similar to Trump. He splits the votes with no one, and thus hoards the support of a suspect segment of the American population.

Currently, 25-30 percent of likely Republican voters said Trump is their top choice. That extrapolates into 8-10 percent of America. Is there anyone out there who doesn't know 8-10 percent of America is xenophobic, hates government and worships reality TV stars?

Avowed racist and American Independent candidate George Wallace won 14 percent of the popular vote — and five Southern states —in the 1968 presidential election won by Richard Nixon. That was just a generation ago. It's no surprise that those voters in the underbelly of America still exist, and Trump would get their support in droves.

> Donald Trump has no chance of becoming president of the United States.

OK. So if we shouldn't be surprised, then should we be scared?

This man is saying out loud, in public, what society has banished to Klan meetings and Internet comment sections. Isn't this kind of divisiveness going to inflame our enemies and dumb down political debate even more?

Maybe if you're an American Muslim, Trump's rhetoric could make you feel unsafe and unwelcome. His anger could inspire violence against you, and maybe even get you deported depending on what unconstitutional plans Trump would actually be able to accomplish from the executive branch.

But we'd argue most Americans should not be scared by this bully. He's a lot of hot air and a Saturday Night Live punchline, but he's not a realistic candidate for president.

So let your blood pressure drop, let your online outrage machine have the night off. Don't worry about Donald Trump. Instead, think about the other candidates of both parties who are much more likely to win and have plenty of skeletons in their closets too.

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of Publisher Kathryn Brown, Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, and Opinion Page Editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

YOUR VIEWS

Muslims are not the problem, Trump is

I want to commend your editorial on Dec. 8. To throw a blanket over all Muslims and blame them for the acts of a tiny portion of the Islamic community is repeating the mindset of this country when it's at its worst. This country is great because of its diversity and the fact that Donald Trump can say the horrible things he does and yet remain on the public stage is a testament to how strong we are.

Trump's campaign slogan is "Make America Great Again." In my opinion, America has never been greater. The fact that God does not send lightning bolts our way for merely allowing a jackass like Donald Trump to participate in the national dialogue shows how great we are.

We only need to remember how we treated Americans of Japanese ancestry after Pearl Harbor to see the folly of Mr. Trump's "ideas." We are still doing mea culpas over that "brilliant" strategy 74 years later.

Patrick J. Delaney
Hermiston

Syrian refugees carry unknown disease, parasites

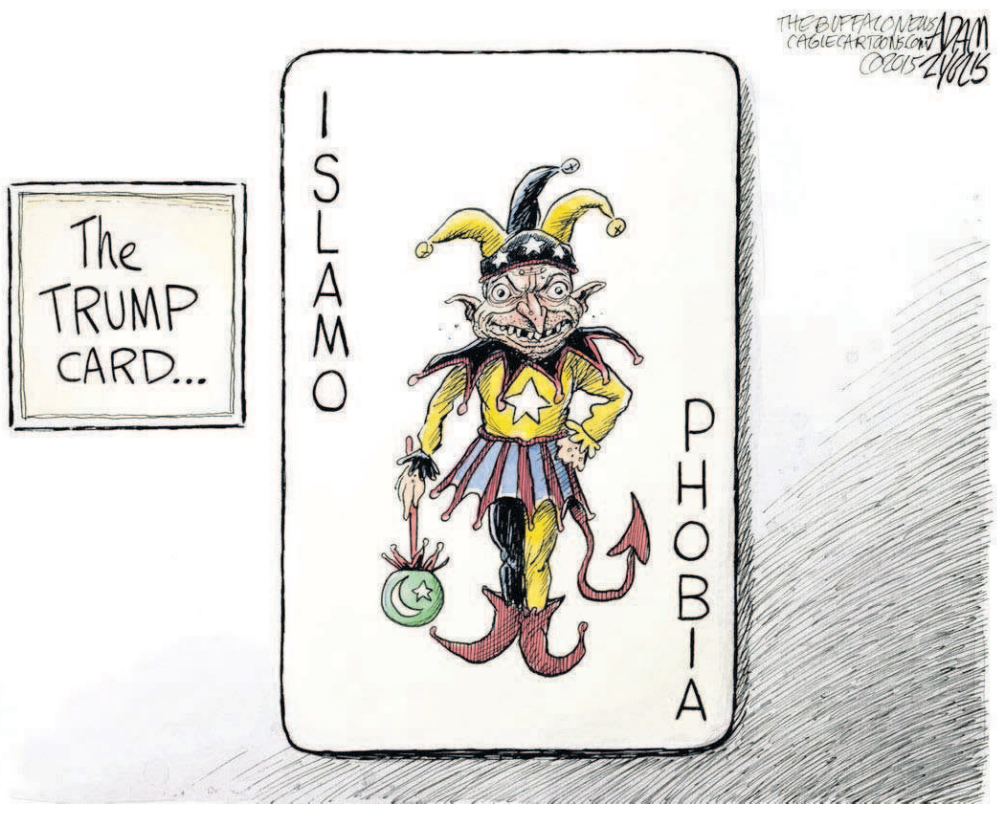
I am shocked by the lack of information about medical consequences of bringing Syrian refugees to the United States from the Surgeon General, Centers for Disease Control or the National Institutes of Health.

These poor folks have no or little medical care and most likely have been exposed to contagious diseases and parasites that have not been studied in the U.S.

Why has there been no information for us?

Mike Mehren
Hermiston

OTHER VIEWS



#You Ain't No American, Bro

THOMAS FRIEDMAN
Comment

Two weeks ago, I was in Kuwait participating in an IMF seminar for Arab educators. For 30 minutes, we discussed the impact of technology trends on education in the Middle East. And then an Egyptian education official raised his hand and asked if he could ask me a personal question: "I heard Donald Trump say we need to close mosques in the United States," he said with great sorrow. "Is that what we want our kids to learn?"

I tried to assure him that Trump would not be our next president — that America's commitment to pluralism runs deep. But the encounter was a bracing reminder that what starts in Iowa shows up in Kuwait five minutes later. Trump, by alienating the Muslim world with his call for a ban on Muslims entering the United States, is acting as the Islamic State's secret agent. ISIS wants every Muslim in America (and Europe) to feel alienated. If that happens, ISIS won't need to recruit anyone. People will will just act on their own. ISIS and Islamic extremism are Muslim problems that can only be fixed by Muslims. Lumping all Muslims together as our enemies will only make that challenge harder.

> All our allies for a coalition to take down ISIS want what we want, but as their second choice.

But if Trump is wrong, is President Barack Obama right? Partly. He's right that the only way you can sustainably defeat ISIS is with a coalition. We need moderate Sunni Muslim forces to go house to house against ISIS in Iraq. We need Sunni spiritual leaders to go heart to heart and delegitimize the ISIS message everywhere. And we need Iran to make clear it supports an equitable power-sharing agreement in Iraq between Sunnis and Shiites, so moderate Sunni Arabs will fight ISIS rather than seeing it as their shield against Iran.

What Obama also has right is that old saying: "If you're in a poker game and you don't know who the sucker is, it's probably you." That's the game we're in in Iraq and Syria. All our allies for a coalition to take down ISIS want what we want, but as their second choice.

Kurds are not going to die to liberate Mosul from ISIS in order to hand it over to a Shiite-led government in Baghdad; they'll want to keep it. The Turks primarily want to block the Kurds. The Iranians want ISIS crushed, but worry that if moderate Sunnis take over its territory they could one day threaten Iran's allies in Iraq and Syria. The Saudi government would like ISIS to disappear, but its priority right now is crushing Iranian-backed rebels in Yemen. And with 1,000 Saudi youths having joined ISIS as fighters — and with Saudi Arabia leading the world in pro-ISIS tweets, according to a recent Brookings study — the Saudi government is wary about leading the anti-ISIS fight. The Russians pretend to fight ISIS, but they are really in Syria to protect Bashar Assad and defeat his moderate foes.

It's not exactly the D-Day alliance. It's a deck full of jokers, none of whose priority is defeating ISIS and replacing it with a multisectarian democracy in Iraq and Syria, which is our goal. And yet, I worry: These ISIS guys are smart and wicked. The longer they control territory, the more likely they'll acquire something really scary, like a dirty bomb.

Sufficient U.S. ground forces could easily crush ISIS, but the morning after — when we try to put in place a decent local government to replace our troops — we'd face those mixed motives of all of our coalition partners. So what to do?

I'd do a bit more of everything: Apply more pressure on our Sunni allies to join the anti-ISIS fight with troops on the ground; call on the Saudis and other Sunnis to loudly delegitimize ISIS; deploy more U.S. and NATO Special Forces; make clear to Iran that we might have to put the nuclear deal on hold if Iran is not a more constructive partner in Iraq and Syria; and stress that while we know that the violent jihadis are a minority among Muslims, the notion that they're a totally separate and distinct group is not true. ISIS ideology comes directly out of the most puritanical, anti-pluralistic Salafist school of Islam, which promotes a lot of hostility toward "the other" — Shiites, Jews, Hindus, Christians. Clearly, some people are taking permission and inspiration from this puritanical Islam to murder and sow mayhem. I can't reform it, but a movement of Muslims must, because it is isolating their whole community.

There are some good signs. NPR reported Monday that "when a man wielding a knife stabbed three people at an East London subway stop on Saturday evening and shouted, 'This is for Syria,' as he was being handcuffed ... an onlooker yelled, 'You ain't no Muslim, bruv!' using slang akin to 'bro.' 'You're no Muslim. You ain't no Muslim,' he repeated. The man who made the statement has not been identified, but the hashtag '#YouAintNoMuslimBruv' began trending worldwide," no doubt propelled by Muslims. That's what we need more of.

As for Trump, well, he may be a dealmaker, but he's no poker player ready for the Middle East five-card stud sharks. His xenophobic rhetoric and unrealistic, infantile threats of carpet-bombing make up the kind of simplistic hand you'd play in "Go Fish" — not in this high-stakes game. Beyond playing into ISIS' hand by denigrating the U.S. presidency and our democratic ideals, Trump is doing real damage to America's ability to lead a coalition, the only vehicle that can effectively address this problem.

#You ain't no American, bro.

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Thomas L. Friedman won the 2002 Pulitzer Prize for commentary, his third Pulitzer for The New York Times. He became the paper's foreign-affairs Op-Ed columnist in 1995.

LETTERS POLICY

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