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OUR VIEW

Trump will make GOP unrecognizable

This is the era of disruptive technologies. Uber is one for the taxi industry, Airbnb for hoteliers, the internet for newspapers.

Such technologies use innovation to create an entirely new market with an entirely new value. The rules of the game must be quickly rewritten and long-entrenched powers are thrown scrambling to the bottom of the heap.

Donald Trump is such a disruptive technology for the Republican Party. The GOP will be unrecognizable once he is through with it, whether that is in November or two presidential terms down the road.

Over the course of his campaign, Trump has dismantled numerous supposed cornerstone beliefs of the Republican party, sometimes for good and sometimes in a way that will do longterm damage to the GOP.

Here are a few examples:

Republicans are known for their unwavering support of the American military, but Trump's plethora of potshots haven't spared American soldiers.

"He's not a war hero," he famously sneered about John McCain, a man who suffered gravely in the name of the United States after being captured and tortured in a North Vietnamese prison cell for more than five years.

And last week he accused soldiers of graft and corruption: "Iraq, crooked as hell. How about bringing baskets of money — millions and millions of dollars — and handing it out ... I want to know who were the soldiers that had that job, because I think they're living very well right now, whoever they may be."

He also has plans to privatize veterans' care and was caught lying about his financial support for veterans' charities, only cutting the check months after he promised he would and after being repeatedly questioned about it by The Washington Post. He also said he would order American service members to kill the families of ISIS members, something that would make them immediate war criminals. He has also excoriated George W. Bush and his wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Another example: Perhaps one of the thickest planks in the Republican platform in recent decades has been opposing abortion.

And despite being pro-choice for much of his life, Trump now says no one is as anti-abortion as he is.

Yet he went out of his way to support Planned Parenthood when the organization was under routine attack during Republican primary debates.

"You can say whatever you want, but they have millions of women going through Planned Parenthood that are helped greatly," he said.

It caused millions of heads to spin, but it didn't cause his poll numbers to dip.

Neither did his background

— three wives and two divorces — which you think may have scared off evangelical voters who make up such a powerful segment of the

GOP. You might think Trump's inability to name a single Bible verse would be held against him by voters, but it's not so.

Just this week he attacked another sacred cow within the GOP coalition: the National Rifle Association. Trump said he would approach the NRA about a law that

would ban people on the terrorist watch list from buying guns. It's a great idea — something more than 90 percent of Americans agree with — but because of NRA power and threats such a bill has not been able to pass the Senate.

Trump's naiveté and his ego have allowed him to bust down doors no one thought any GOP candidate could get away with.

He has leveled blistering attacks on Fox News and popular anchor Megyn Kelly.

He has been notably fickle on matters of policy, and his anti-free trade platform is at odds with Republican orthodoxy that promotes industry-led policies.

And don't get us started on immigration. Party leaders like Paul Ryan have threatened to sue Trump over his immigration bans and forced deportations. And no one in either party takes Trump's idea to build a wall and make Mexico pay for it seriously.

He has ripped apart Obamacare at every turn, but also spoke in support of making sure the government didn't let people "die on the streets."

Trump's success is inexplicable on one hand, but quite simple on the other.

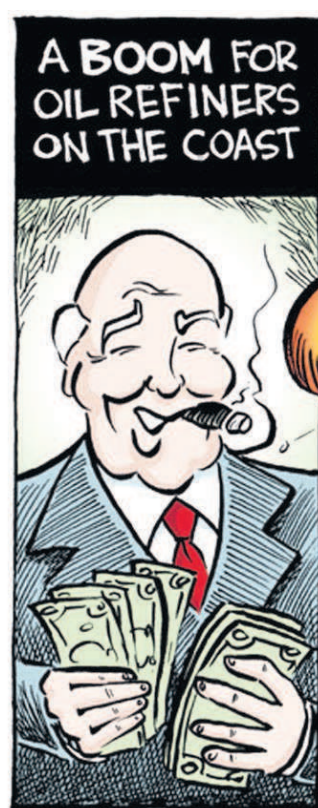
He is a reminder that the boogymen that have been propping up the Republican Party for generations have become outdated. A majority of Americans are no longer fearful about gays or marijuana or Communist health care.

Trump has created new boogymen — mostly racially focused — that have had success in congealing a sizable contingent of Republicans around him. But he's certainly polling in the mid 30s, a disastrous number, and if he fails in the November election or even fails to make it that far, Republicans will have a difficult task of rebuilding the Grand Old Party.

Yet all his wild disruptions have yanked a few rotten planks from the Republican platform. There is a chance it is rebuilt as a more modern party, released from the shackles of a few bad stances. But there is also the risk that it is reborn as a mutant mess of dangerously far-right, anti-immigration, isolationist insult comics.

Trump will not leave anything as he found it. That may be beneficial in the Republican primary, but it's more than a little nerve-wracking to think he could recast what it means to be president of the most powerful county on Earth.

Over the course of his campaign, Trump has dismantled numerous supposed cornerstone beliefs of the Republican Party.



OTHER VIEWS

Religion's wicked neighbor

Barack Obama is clearly wrong when he refuses to use the word "Islam" in reference to Islamist terrorism. The people who commit these acts are inflamed by a version of an Islamist ideology. They claim an Islamist identity. They swear fealty to organizations like ISIS that govern themselves according to certain interpretations of the Quran.

As Peter Bergen writes in his book "The United States of Jihad," "Assertions that Islamist terrorism has nothing to do with Islam are as nonsensical as claims that the Crusades had nothing to do with Christian beliefs about the sanctity of Jerusalem."

On the other hand, Donald Trump is abhorrently wrong in implying that these attacks are central to Islam. His attempt to ban Muslim immigration is an act of bigotry (applying the sins of the few to the whole group), which is sure to incite more terrorism. His implication that we are in a clash of civilizations is an insult to those Muslims who have risked and lost their lives in the fight against ISIS and the Taliban.

The problem is that these two wrongs are feeding off each other. Obama is using language to engineer a reaction rather than to tell the truth, which is the definition of propaganda. Most world leaders talk about Islamist terror, but Obama apparently thinks that if he uses the phrase "Islamic radicalism" the rest of us will be too dim to be able to distinguish between the terrorists and the millions of good-hearted Muslims who want only to live in fellowship and peace.

Worst of all, his decision to dance around an unpleasant reality is part of the enveloping cloud of political correctness that drives people to Donald Trump. Millions of Americans feel they can't say what they think, or even entertain views outside the boundaries laid down by elites, and so are drawn to the guy who rails against taboos and says what he believes.

The fact is that 15 years after 9/11 we still haven't arrived at a true understanding of our enemy. How much is religion involved in jihadism, or psychology, or politics?

And the core of our confusion is that we are unclear about what a religion is, and how it might relate to violence sometimes carried out in its name.

For clarity on that question, it helps to start with William James' classic work, "The Varieties of Religious Experience." In that book, James distinguishes between various religious experiences and "religion's wicked practical partner, the spirit of corporate



DAVID BROOKS
Comment

dominion, and religion's wicked intellectual partner, the spirit of dogmatic dominion, the passion for laying down the law."

In other words, there is the spirit of religion and, frequently accompanying it, its wicked neighbors, the spirit of political and intellectual dominion.

It seems blindingly obvious to say, but the spirit of religion begins with a sense that God exists. God is the primary reality, and out of that flows a set of values and experiences: prayer, praise, charity, contrition, grace and the desire to grow closer toward holiness.

Sincere faith begins with humility in relation to the Almighty and a sense of being strengthened by his infinite love.

In some sense the phrase "Islamic radicalism" is wrong because terrorism is not a radical extension of this kind of faith. People don't start out with this kind of faith and then turn into terrorists because they became more faithful.

The spirit of dominion, on the other hand, does not start with an awareness of God. It starts with a sense

of injury and a desire to heal injury through revenge and domination.

For the terrorist, a sense of humiliation is the primary reality. Terrorism emerges from a psychic state, not a spiritual one. This turns into a grievance, the belief that some external enemy is the cause of this injury, rather than some internal weakness.

This then leads to what forensic psychologist Reid Meloy calls "vicarious identification" — the moral outrage that comes from the belief that my victimization is connected to the larger victimization of my group.

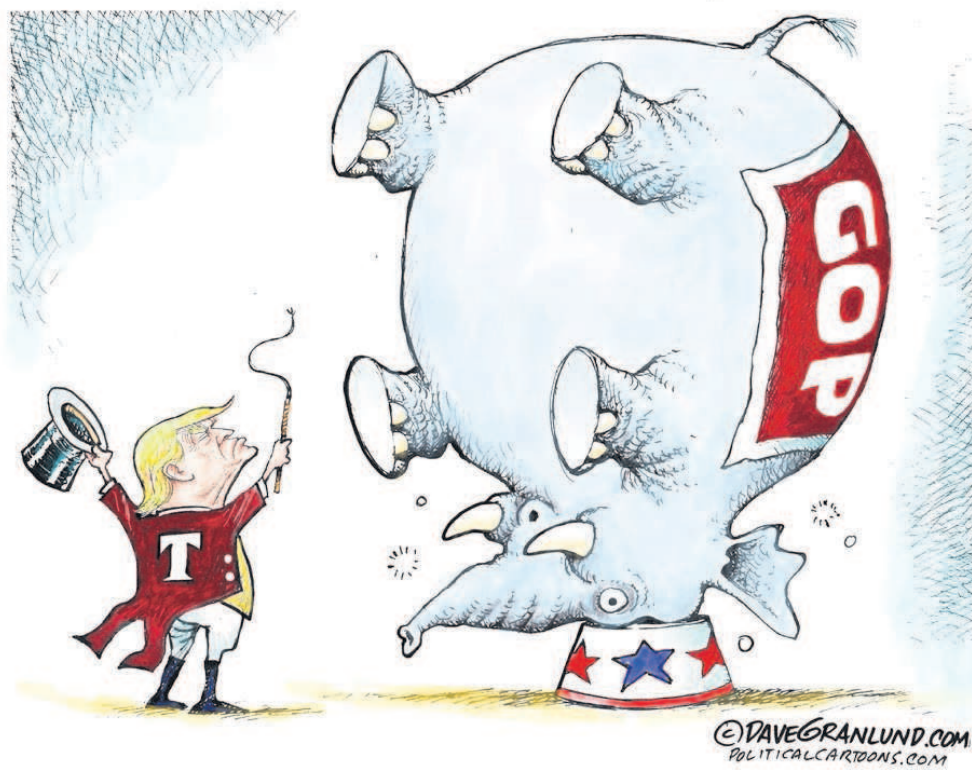
It's only at this point in the pathway that religion enters the picture, or rather an absolutist, all-explaining political ideology that is the weed that grows up next to religion. Bin Ladinism explains all of history and gives the injured a course of action that will make them feel grandiose and heroic. It is the human impulse for dominance and revenge that borrows righteous garb.

For the religious person it's about God. For the terrorist, it's about himself. When Omar Mateen was in the midst of his rampage, he was posting on Facebook and calling a TV station. His audience was us, not the Divine.

Omar Mateen wanted us to think he was martyring himself in the name of holiness. He was actually a sad loser obliterating himself for the sake of revenge.

David Brooks became a New York Times Op-Ed columnist in September 2003.

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