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## A POSSIBLE REPUBLICAN GOVERNMENT IN THE U.S.A.: *The future of Islam*

Maria Kourpa\*

***The forthcoming presidential elections in the United States are possibly the most crucial of the last decades. As the presidency of the extremely popular Barack Obama is coming to its end, the presidential candidates are going to extremes. Whilst the Democratic Party is proposing its most "socialist" candidate in years, the Republican Party participates in a festival of xenophobia and bigotry with aggressive international policies outside the United States and dangerous immigration policies inside them. But what if the next U.S. president is a Republican? What would be the implications on the political situation in the Middle East and the Muslims within the U.S.?***

\* Researcher of the Centre for Mediterranean, Middle East and Islamic Studies of the University of Peloponnese.

## The immigration and homeland security policies

The Republican Party accuses Barak Obama for being too soft and moderate on Islam, especially after his declaration against islamophobia following the San Bernardino attacks. The two leading Republican candidates, the celebrity billionaire Donald Trump and the Canada-born Texan Ted Cruz, agreed on banning Syrian refugees from entering America, or at least the Muslim ones. Donald Trump went as far as to propose the ban of every Muslim coming to the U.S. from every country, either seeking asylum or just visiting. As a temporary measurement, every individual coming in the U.S. would have to pass through a certain religious test by answering the simple question: “Do you believe in Islam?”. This measurement is supposed to give the government just enough time to examine the complexity of the Muslim world before accepting more Muslims.<sup>1</sup> The rest of the Republican candidates are condemning the proposal, although they do support similar laws to be voted.

Likewise, Ted Cruz is promoting in the Senate a new legislation concerning a three-year moratorium on those asylum seekers coming from areas controlled by Al-Qaeda, ISIS or other terrorist organizations, as they might be undercover terrorists.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, he calls for more strict controls on the borders for Muslims, especially after the arrest of 41 identified terrorists in the U.S.<sup>3</sup> and the block of the SAFE act by the Democratic Party.<sup>4</sup> Conservative think tanks argue that these measurements will only ban the Muslim elites from entering the U.S. The Heritage Foundation, GOP’s unofficial think-tank, proposes the enforcement of immigrant controls and the proliferation of deportations, plus strict refugee and visa vetting.<sup>5</sup>

As for the Homeland Security policies, Donald Trump proposed—following the San Bernardino attacks—the surveillance against mosques for aspiring extremists. He also proposed the creation of a database for Muslims in the U.S., for following their acts and beliefs, with the help of secret intelligence.<sup>6</sup> Texan Senator Ted Cruz called instead for limited phone surveillance programs, under strict law enforcement, as voted in the USA Freedom Act.<sup>7</sup> Chris Christie—the candidate from New Jersey that suspended his campaign after the New Hampshire primaries— had proposed the cooperation with “peaceful Muslim Americans” for providing intelligence against the radicals,<sup>8</sup> while Florida Senator Mark Rubio called for closing down suspicious mosques or other gathering places, such as cafes, diners or internet sites.<sup>9</sup>

Unfortunately, the Republicans are maybe seeking to exploit American society’s fear and conservatism. According to a survey by Bloomberg, 65% of the Republican voters are in favor of the Muslims ban, as well as 36% of all Americans.<sup>10</sup> American Muslim societies, such as the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) and the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), are constantly reporting racist attacks on American Muslims and they have been organizing events on promoting tolerance. Conservative think tanks, such as the Gatestone Institute, are implying that these associations are linked to the Muslim Brotherhood, “a terrorist organization in collusion with ISIS.”<sup>11</sup>

## The Middle East Policies

When it comes to Middle East policies, the GOP is blaming Obama’s administration for letting ISIS grow and expand and is calling for reassertion of the American role in the area. Conservatives are in favor of a stronger alliance with Israel, as well as the reinforcement of U.S. military forces in the area. They also set missile defense as a high priority for the U.S. As an economic measurement, they want to provoke pressure on oil prices to weaken oil-producing states, like Iran.

Donald Trump is very keen on a coalition against terrorism with Russian President Vladimir Putin—to whom he has declared his admiration. He plans to bomb ISIS-controlled territories, but also to seize the group’s oil sources, as this is its main revenue. Ted Cruz has been also eager to cooperate with unpleasant key players in the Middle East against terrorism. Specifically, he suggested cooperating

with undemocratic dictators like Bashar al-Assad, as the least bad choice. The possible overthrow of his regime would allow ISIS to expand.<sup>12</sup> Yet, at the same time, Cruz insists that the U.S. should not choose sides in the Syrian civil war in order to avoid what happened in Libya when the U.S. sided with revolutionaries to topple the Qaddafi regime. He, too, supported “carpet-bombing” in ISIS’ locations, but was against any American troop invading the Syrian or Iraqi ground, along with Senator Rubio and apparently President Obama. Instead, he proposed the direct arming of Kurdish Peshmerga forces, as well as of the militaries of Jordan and Egypt that are already receiving U.S military aid against ISIS.<sup>13</sup>

There is no doubt that the GOP opposes Obama’s agreement with Iran concerning its nuclear program.<sup>14</sup> The Heritage Foundation proposes instead sanctions on Iran on the grounds of “supporting terrorism, human rights violations and the use of nuclear weapons.”<sup>15</sup>

So far, it seems that we cannot really and safely predict the next American President or even each Party’s presidential candidate. When it comes to a possible Republican victory though, we can safely expect a strict homeland security and a determined foreign policy that focuses on anti-terrorism. In any case, this will not come without fear of bigotry against Muslims and limitations of personal freedoms of American citizens or the possibility of a tense situation in the Middle East.

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