

What might a Trump presidency mean for Muslims and the Muslim world?

Written by Mehmet Ozalp, Associate Professor in Islamic Studies, Director of The Centre for Islamic Studies and Civilisation, Charles Sturt University

A Donald Trump presidency will have unforeseen consequences for just about every interest group on the planet, but Muslims and the Muslim world may be feeling this historic upset particularly keenly.

During the election campaign, Trump [said](#) he planned “a total and complete shutdown of Muslims” entering the US, voiced support for a database on Muslims in the US, and has made several divisive and Islamophobic comments.

So it would be no surprise if the 1.6 billion Muslims around the world were now feeling a mix of shock, trauma and worry.

However, a Trump presidency may not be all doom and gloom for Muslims. Yes, there is cause for concern, but there is reason for optimism too.

Let's start with the optimism.

Campaign mode versus presidential mode

Now the election is over and he won, Trump is likely to relax and pull back on his rhetoric. As many [observers](#) have [noted](#), Trump's victory speech and comments made after meeting outgoing president Barack Obama were much more measured in tone and content than his inflammatory campaign comments.

In the light and heat of the election campaign, Trump had to appeal to the blue-collar masses and a certain Republican voting base. He knew what they were looking for and delivered it.

As president, though, he will soon realise rhetoric is not enough. People will expect solutions to real problems, and that could have a civilising effect on Trump's thinking and behaviour.

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Second, while he would never describe himself this way, Trump is a political novice. It is for this reason that the president-elect does not immediately assume the helm.

In the next three months or so, Trump will be educated by countless information sessions and reports prepared and delivered by seasoned officials in the state department. This may bring Trump a huge reality check regarding the gravity and complexity of government. He will quickly discover that it's not always possible for a president to immediately implement whatever he likes.

Third, the issues that he will be confronted with and the broad spectrum of people and world leaders he will meet may moderate his views. He will quickly learn that he is supposed to be the "leader of the free world", not the chairman of the board of an increasingly authoritarian line-up of world leaders.

That said, it's been clear for some time that Trump is partial to vitriolic rhetoric, and that strains of extremism run through his thoughts. So Muslims do have important reasons to worry about a Trump presidency.

Cause for concern

It is quite likely that Trump's election will be [welcomed by ISIS](#) and their radical ilk.

Radicals on extreme ends have a tendency to feed one another. For ISIS to continue winning the hearts and minds of Muslim youth around the world, they need a clear anti-Muslim enemy. Who is more perfect for that role than an openly Islamophobic Trump? A Trump presidency helps perpetuate the narrative of radical Muslims and makes it hard for mainstream Muslims to prevent extremism and violent radicalisation.

Trump has also shown in his campaign that he can evolve as he goes, but it is anyone's guess what evolutionary track he will take from here. Given the severity of domestic and international conditions, it is not looking good.

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For the Muslim-majority countries, the reaction of their leadership will be pragmatic. For those leaders who need to be seen by their citizens as anti-US, Trump is the perfect president. It may not be long before we see openly expressed negative rhetoric between US and a leader of a Muslim-majority country. Egos and national interests will clash. This could trigger pro-Trump media coverage in Muslim majority countries that want to be seen as pro-US. Expect further splits in already divided Muslim societies.

For Muslim minorities living in Western countries, a Trump presidency is a lose-lose scenario. Many have observed a [direct correlation](#) between the vitriol of political leaders and the rise of anti-Muslim sentiment. Trump may not be able to resist the temptation. Social groups and institutions who stand to benefit from the widespread anti-Islam sentiments will be emboldened by a Trump presidency.

However events transpire, a Trump presidency will be uncertain, unpredictable and, not least of all, interesting.

UPDATE: This article was updated on November 11 to reflect the fact that Trump's promise to ban Muslims from entering the US, which an earlier version of this story said had [disappeared](#) from his website, has now been put back. A Trump spokesman was [reported](#) as saying the issue was explained by a technical glitch.

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