

## Trump's popular slogans will not be enough to win him the primary election: Weber

### INTERVIEW

BY: Javad Heirannia

Eric Thomas Weber, associate professor of Public Policy Leadership at the University of Mississippi, says U.S. Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump is "certainly enjoying popularity as a critic of more traditional politicians" but his "popular slogans will not be enough to win him the primary election."

However Weber, the author of the book entitled "Uniting Mississippi: Democracy and Leadership in the South", tells the Tehran Times that "at present, the general feeling is that until a strong enough Republican challenger emerges, Hillary Clinton has a very strong chance at the White House."

Following is the text of the interview:

**Why the number of Republican primaries is more than those of Democrats for the next year's presidential election?**

A: The Republican primaries have included far more candidates because they have few candidates who stand out as clearly as do the two front-runners in the Democratic Party. Among the candidates, some have seen more success at stim-

ulating the base, but other candidates have good reason to hope that the field will shift over time. The impressive political analyst Nate Silver of FiveThirtyEight, previously of The New York Times, has explained that Trump is very unlikely to win the ticket. Given that a shift is likely, the next steps for the party could move in any number of directions. That is why so many candidates are at the ready to capture the ticket. Most people find it hard to imagine Hillary Clinton not getting the nomination for the Democrats, though if she isn't the one, then the next most likely candidate is also clear.

**Surveys show that Donald Trump - a Republican - enjoys higher position in comparison to other primaries. Some argue that the popularity of Trump is because he says something that is different from**

**other Republicans and also Democrats. What is your analysis?**

A: Donald Trump is certainly enjoying popularity as a critic of more traditional politicians. People who are angry about the direction of the country may have so far found inspiration in a select few of the positions he has taken. He has especially been playing on identity politics, with a focus on immigrants. It wouldn't be right to say that he takes positions different from both parties or to say that he avoids slogans. His latest slogan is "Build the wall!" The strange thing about Trump that has yet to sink his campaign, but is likely to in time, is the fact that the positions he does hold are ones common to Republicans at times and then Democrats at others, but only rarely moderate ones for each party. His positions on immigration



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and his change of position to pro-life policy are popular among Republicans, but he is also in favor of universal health coverage and tax on the wealthy to achieve it. He captures excitement on individual or select issues, but the number of people who will favor his combination of views in the end appears small to Silver of FiveThirtyEight. I suspect that Silver is right.

**What is the status of Democrats and Republicans among people in regard to their slogans?**

A: As I have said, I believe that Trump's popular slogans will not be enough to win him the primary election. Single issue voters may well vote for him, but none of his positions have been so unifying as to be enough. His line, "Make America Great Again," has some popularity, hearkening back to some idealized sense of the past. In point of fact, he is quite progressive on issues like healthcare, one of the issues around which Republicans are unified in opposition over the last few years. His opponents in the primary have yet to succeed in their messaging, even though there are opportunities to capture interest.

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*Contd. from P. 11*

The Koch brothers, generally considered supporters of the political Right, have been vocal about hyper-incarceration in the U.S., an issue of great concern to moderate Republicans and to Democrats. So far, few have focused on the issue, with exceptions like Carly Fiorina. There is an opportunity there for candidates on both sides to show what they think about this important topic. Bernie Sanders has been vocal on it, yet many among Democrats do not believe his far reaching vision on a number of issues will have much chance of enactment, whether they want to see such a future or not. There is reason for skepticism, given the frustrations in Congress and the limits on what Presidents can do. At the same time, this issue appears to

have the potential to unify moderate voters.

Bernie Sanders's approach leans on the language of "revolutionary" ideals. While many more people have shown him support than might have been predicted a few years ago, the average Democrat is likely to feel dubious about the potential for big change. Democrats' big change occurred when they controlled Congress and the White House.

Hillary Clinton has not yet ventured out much with her framing, which might be because she holds a substantial lead at present for the Democratic ticket. At present, the general feeling is that until a strong enough Republican challenger emerges, Hillary Clinton has a very strong chance at the White House. The important thing to remember is

that in the political world, a month or two is a long time. The fact that there is more than a year before the election means that any of the predictions I or anyone makes have to be taken with acknowledgement of how much can change.

**Based on opinion polls, Hillary Clinton's popularity has declined 10%. What are the reasons for this?**

A: Hillary Clinton has long been the anticipated front-runner for the Democrats. It is natural for her numbers to decline as challengers work to gain ground. She needs to defend her lead. As she has been the target of investigations, attention to such talk will have some negative results. In addition, her performance at the first debate was strong, but Sanders' supporters are seeing him finally get attention on a level stage. The thing

about investigations into Clinton over Benghazi or emails is that while they can have a negative effect, they can also work to her advantage when relevant parties are found to be after her for political gain, rather than over real concerns. Until clear substance can be revealed in plain English, succinctly stating a grave mistake on Clinton's part, the investigations are unlikely to carry much weight. If people are after her, as some recent admissions have acknowledged, her support among moderates is likely to grow. As I have said, though, with over a year to go, any number of shifts can occur. What makes prediction especially difficult at this point is skepticism that Trump will obtain the Republican nomination.