

CAPX

Trump's road to victory? Only if you believe him.

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As a member of the #NeverTrump team, I have been wondering what it would take for Donald Trump to gain my vote and, much more importantly, unify the fragmented Republican Party around his candidacy in November. (I am afraid you will have to read this article to the end to find out the answers.)

The stakes in the general election will be high. A Hillary Clinton presidency would solidify progressive gains achieved by Barack Obama, including some of his more disastrous policies, like Obamacare. Importantly, it would give the U.S. Supreme Court a progressive majority for at least a couple of decades. In that case, get ready for state enforced yoga exercises, a kale-based diet and coffee enemas. I jest, but only a little.

Standing in Clinton's way is one of the most unpopular candidates in American history. From what we have seen, it is clear that Trump is a thin-skinned narcissist and megalomaniac. He is a brute, a buffoon and a demagogue. He lives in a fact-free universe and ran a primary campaign almost completely devoid of concrete policy prescriptions. As such, no one can be sure what policies – good and bad – he will actually pursue once in the Oval Office. I guess much will depend on which side of the bed he wakes up on. Hail Caesar!

If the general election is about Trump “the man,” he ought to lose. But, what if the campaign is about Trump's “team”? Let me explain.

Trump doesn't have a clear ideology and that gives him considerable flexibility in terms of naming the members of his Administration. As such, he could appease, even excite, different parts of the GOP by doing something revolutionary – naming his Cabinet and U.S. Supreme Court nominees well before the November election. Senator Ted Cruz named Carly Fiorina as his running mate a couple of days before suspending his presidential campaign. There is no rule against Trump doing the same, but on a much larger scale. These are, after all, unconventional times.

Last Thursday, Karl Rove made a similar point. In Rove's view, naming the nominees for his Cabinet and picks for the Supreme Court would give Trump's candidacy more of a programmatic heft. That is true, but my point is slightly different. By committing to concrete individuals, Trump would finally give his candidacy more of an ideological profile.

Throughout the presidential campaign, Trump has gone around claiming that he is a conservative. Yet he has never defined what conservatism means to him. Well, here is his chance. Trump could, for example, commit to naming Senator Mike Lee as his U.S. Supreme Court nominee. That would excite the Constitutional wing of the Republican Party and give

Constitutionally-minded voters a reason to support Trump's campaign and vote for him in the fall.

I have started with Lee, because he is a small-government Republican who share my passion for the Constitution. Conversely, nominating Senator John McCain as Trump's Secretary of Defense would undoubtedly excite the GOP war hawks, but scare the heck out of me. Putting Senator Jeff Sessions in charge of trade would, in my mind, be catastrophic.

But that's not the point!

The GOP has its share of well-known heavyweights who appeal to different and, often sizeable, segments of the currently fragmented Republican Party. Embracing some of them would rally many voters to Trump's flag and substantially improve his chances of success in November.

Eagle-eyed readers will no doubt notice that naming neocons, protectionists and small-government candidates to the Cabinet and the Supreme Court is, to put it mildly, ideologically incongruent. But that does not matter. What matters is that people who care about individual issues above all else – be those issues defense, immigration, trade or the Constitution – feel that they have “their” man or woman in charge.

As for me, there is nothing that Trump can do to make me vote for him. The problem is: I do not trust anything the man says. It is not only his lies during the primaries that are off-putting. Trump's frequent and casual flip flops on major economic, social and foreign policy issues continue to this day.

Senator Mike Lee may be to my taste as a Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, but I have zero confidence in Trump making such an appointment a reality. As such, I remain a proud member of the #NeverTrump camp.

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