

Is Donald Trump another Andrew Jackson?

Philip Bitar

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Andrew Jackson was the first anti-establishment President of the United States.

The prior presidents were George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, and John Quincy Adams. All of these prior presidents were from the eastern elite, while Jackson was associated with the west — west of the Appalachian Mountains — and with the common man.

In running for the presidency, Jackson was popular as representing the common man against the establishment elites, who had controlled the presidency since the founding of the nation.

Jackson was an independent-minded, self-confident, combative leader. He had a fierce temper, and he would crudely denigrate his opponents and his detractors.

He was unpredictable because he wasn't part of an identifiable political movement. Instead, his leadership eventually engendered a new political movement, which came to be known as Jacksonian Democracy and which led to the founding of the Democrat Party.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacksonian_democracy
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Jackson_presidential_campaign,_1828
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coffin_Handbills

Due to similarities between Donald Trump and Andrew Jackson, I think that it would be instructive to compare and contrast the two men. Doing so may help us to better understand the popularity of Trump and to better predict the future of the Republican Party and of the United States.

I wish to emphasize that this topic constitutes an analysis of American history and of American electoral processes. This topic is not about supporting or opposing Donald Trump or any other electoral candidate.

Discussion post 2016-03-05 – Philip Bitar

A common theme in presidential electoral politics in the 1800s was that a well-known military leader, who had no significant political experience, would run and get elected. Here are those people: George Washington, Andrew Jackson, William Henry Harrison, Zachary Taylor, Ulysses Grant, and, in the 1900s, Dwight Eisenhower.

Except for the cases of Washington and Jackson, party leaders solicited such a person in the hope that their popularity would carry the party to victory in the election. Such a person is admired for their military achievements and is respected for their leadership ability. But in the absence of a political track record, the policies that they will propose and support as president are somewhat uncertain. The uncertainty is hopefully reduced by the party banner that they run under.

The candidacy of Donald Trump is similar to that of a military leader. His supporters admire him for his business achievements, and they respect him for his leadership ability. But in the absence of a political track record, the policies that Trump will propose and support as president are somewhat uncertain. The uncertainty is reduced to some extent because he is running under the Republican banner, and he is espousing policy proposals that are, overall, consistent with that banner.

However, like the military leaders who became president, he has not been strongly identified with the respective party. As a result, like those leaders, he doesn't feel so much a commitment to a party as he does a commitment to be a unique and productive leader in a way that seems best to him at the time.

Discussion post 2016-03-05 – Philip Bitar

In truth, no one knew what sort of president Andrew Jackson would be. "My opinion is," wrote Daniel Webster, "that when he comes he will bring a breeze with him. Which way it will blow, I cannot tell."

Saul Braun, revised by Robert A. Rutland, "Andrew Jackson", in Michael Beschloss (ed.), *American Heritage Illustrated History of the Presidents*, 2000, p. 106.

Discussion post 2016-03-07 – Philip Bitar

Robert Livermore posted a comment on the meeting page, suggesting that Trump is more similar to Mussolini than to Andrew Jackson.

This brings to mind a cartoon that became famous during Jackson's presidency. He is portrayed in the garb and the accouterments of a monarch, and the caption reads, "King Andrew the First". He is standing on a badly torn copy of the U.S. constitution.

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2008661753>

Discussion post 2016-03-07 – Philip Bitar

Never intimidated by Congress, Jackson vetoed more legislation than all his predecessors combined.

Robert V. Remini, "Andrew Jackson", in James M. McPherson and David Rubel (eds.), *To the Best of My Ability: The American Presidents*, 2000, p. 64.

It is interesting that Jackson stands out as one of the most powerful presidents in American history, yet he is associated with the term *Jacksonian Democracy*. No doubt he believed that he wielded his power against the powerful elites for the benefit of the common people.

Discussion post 2016-03-11 – Bruce Jones

On reviewing the Wikipedia article, which to me seemed to spin things more favorably than not, I found a few things rather notable, especially in light of this idea of Presidential candidates being honorable and classy.

"During the election, Jackson's opponents referred to him as a "jackass". Jackson liked the name and used the jackass as a symbol for a while, but it died out. However, it later became the symbol for the Democratic Party when cartoonist Thomas Nast popularized it.[37]"

"On the last day of the presidency, Jackson admitted that he had but two regrets, that he "had been unable to shoot Henry Clay or to hang John C. Calhoun." [134]"

To put it in perspective, can you imagine Bill Clinton saying such a thing about Newt Gingrich and Ken Starr, or Bush saying such a thing about Harry Reid and Nancy Pelosi?

From the Wikipedia article, Jackson was considered ruthless towards his adversaries and detractors. He had a history of using excessive force and executions when given the prerogative. Trump does not have a similar record of violence, nor is his temperament similarly nasty. Jackson's record as president read more like a restrained tyrant than a morally principled and gracious leader. Yet somehow Jackson merits representing the ideological foundation of the Democrat Party.

This is why I find comparisons of Trump to fascist villains of the last century so vapid; especially from those who don't know the histories of their affiliated organization's icons.

Discussion post 2016-03-11 – Philip Bitar

There were racial tensions back then, as there are now. Back then, the most notable tensions pertained to whites vs blacks and whites vs. Indians.

Whites vs. Blacks

Here is a quote from the Wikipedia article on Jackson:

The Hermitage plantation was a profit-making enterprise and Jackson, who demanded slave loyalty, permitted slaves to be whipped to increase productivity or if he believed his slaves' offenses were severe enough. Jackson at various times posted advertisements for his fugitive slaves. For the standards of his times Jackson was considered a humane slave owner who furnished his slaves food, housing, and did not prohibit his female slaves from having children.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Jackson#Hermitage_plantation

The Wikipedia article also has a figure on the RHS. Here is the caption of the figure:

Escaped slave notice placed by Andrew Jackson offering a \$50 reward, plus expenses, for the return of an enslaved mulatto man who escaped from Jackson's plantation. In a move unusual for the time, the notice offers "ten dollars extra, for every hundred lashes any person will give him, to the amount of three hundred."

One of the criticisms of Jackson as a candidate was that he went too far in disrespecting slaves.

Jackson also came under heavy attack as a slave trader who bought and sold slaves and moved them about in defiance of modern standards or morality.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Jackson_presidential_campaign,_1828

Whites vs. Indians

Jackson was a notable Indian fighter, and when it came to whites vs. Indians, one of Jackson's first major policy proposals was moving the Indians west to get them out of the way. Jackson held to this policy even for tribes, like the Cherokee, who were developing a western lifestyle. This policy was supported by members of Jackson's growing political movement.

The passage of the bill [the Indian Removal Act] was Jackson's first successful legislative triumph and marked the Democratic party's emergence into American political society.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Jackson#Indian_removal_policy