

Analysis

Kuwait Times
Established 1961
The First Daily in The Arabian Gulf

THE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
ESTABLISHED 1961

Founder and Publisher
YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN

Editor-in-Chief
ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYAN

EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7
FAX : 24835620/1
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163
ACCOUNTS : 24833199 Extn. 125
COMMERCIAL : 24835618

P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.
Email: info@kuwaittimes.com
Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

For Trump, appeals to white fears may be tougher sell in 2020

US President Donald Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric and focus on the grievances of white voters helped him win the 2016 election. But a Reuters analysis of public opinion over the last four years suggests that Trump's brand of white identity politics may be less effective in the 2020 election campaign. The analysis comes amid widespread criticism of Trump's racially charged comments about four minority women lawmakers and the fallout from a mass shooting of Hispanics in El Paso, Texas, that many Democratic presidential candidates swiftly blamed on the president's rhetoric.

Reuters/Ipsos polling of 4,436 US adults in July showed that people who rejected racial stereotypes were more interested in voting in the 2020 general election than those who expressed stronger levels of anti-black or anti-Hispanic biases. In 2016, it was the reverse. The Reuters analysis shows that Trump's narrow win came at a time when Americans with strong anti-black opinions were the more politically engaged group. While Reuters did not measure anti-Hispanic biases in 2016, political scientists say that people who express them closely overlap with those who are biased against other racial minorities.

This year's poll found that among Americans who feel that blacks and whites are equal, or that blacks are superior to whites, 82 percent expressed a strong interest in voting in 2020. That was 7 percentage points higher than people who feel strongly that whites are superior to blacks. "There is some indication that racial liberals are more energized than the racially intolerant," said University of Michigan political scientist Vincent Hutchings, who reviewed Reuters' findings. "That would seem to be good news for the Democrats and bad news for the Republicans."

The July poll did have a silver lining for Trump. Most white Republicans approve of his performance in office. And over the past four years they have become increasingly supportive of his signature issue: expanding the wall along the US-Mexico border. Some 82 percent now support it compared to 75 percent last year. Trump is clearly still as popular as ever with conservatives who dominate the predominantly white, working-class communities that helped him win in 2016, said Duke University political scientist Ashley Jardina, who also reviewed the poll findings.

In his 2016 campaign, Trump focused on the grievances of white voters who feared the global economy was leaving them behind and who wanted more restrictions on immigration. He employed put-downs of Latino immigrants and inner-city, typically black, residents. He said then that Mexicans were "murderers" and "rapists", and as recently as last year, Trump labeled illegal immigration to the United States an "invasion". Trump has asserted repeatedly that his words are not meant to be racially divisive. "I think my rhetoric ... brings people together," he said earlier this month.

Responding to the Reuters polling analysis, a spokesman for Trump's reelection campaign, Daniel Bucheli, said the president "enjoys broad support from diverse groups of Americans, and this coalition of supporters, to include minorities and first time voters, continues to grow daily". "If there is something we've come to learn about President Trump is that he calls it like it is," Bucheli said, when asked about Trump's recent comments about the lawmakers and others.

Declining anxiety

The Reuters analysis also found that Americans were less likely to express feelings of racial anxiety this year, and they were more likely to empathize with African Americans. This was also true for white Americans and whites without a college degree, who largely backed Trump in 2016. White Americans are also 19 percentage points more supportive of a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants and 4 points less supportive of increased deportations, when their responses from the July poll were compared with a Reuters/Ipsos poll in January 2015.

The July 17-22 poll also found that 29 percent of whites agreed that "America must protect and preserve its White European heritage," down 7 points from a Reuters/Ipsos poll conducted in August 2017 and 9 points down from another Reuters/Ipsos poll in Aug 2018. The poll also found that 17 percent of whites and 26 percent of white Republicans said they strongly agree that "white people are currently under attack in this country, a drop of about 6 points and 8 points respectively from 2017. Paula Ioanide, an expert in American race relations at Ithaca College, said the poll findings were consistent with her research that racial anxieties among whites peaked during the presidency of Barack Obama. Some white Americans "are not feeling as under attack as they did in 2016," Ioanide said. With Trump in the White House, "they've seen a kind of endorsement of the kinds of things that they wanted: A restoration of a white identity that they previously had felt was under attack." — Reuters

All articles appearing on this page are the personal opinion of the writers. Kuwait Times takes no responsibility for views expressed therein.



This handout photo taken on Oct 13, 2018 shows local consumers, owners and managers of the first collective farm in the Netherlands arriving to pick up their share of the harvest in Boxtel. — AFP

Dutch 'people's farm' counters climate change

Chickens roam the orchards, cows chew the cud and pigs roll in the mud on a warm day on a Dutch farm - but the pastoral scene is not as traditional as it seems. The farm is owned and run by a cooperative of hundreds of local consumers and aims to change habits in a low-lying country engaged in an existential fight against climate change. Some 200 families decide what the farm will produce - and they will eventually eat - and employ a farmer to tend to the animals for meat and eggs and grow the dozen kinds of fruits and vegetables.

"The main aim of the members is to eat natural products, produced near to where they live, in a more sustainable way," said Douwe Korting, co-leader of the Boxtel cooperative, in the southern Netherlands. "People are really starting to see that a change towards a different way of eating is essential," he added. It costs €2,000 (\$2,200) to join the collective farm, which is 10 minutes by bicycle from the town, and then a weekly fee of around €10 per person. In return, members receive the food they want and stress the importance of knowing what they eat is local and seasonal.

More sustainable

With 15 cows, 20 pigs and 500 chickens, the farm covers about 20 hectares and grows or produces what is col-

lectively decided on by the members, who will ultimately take home their share. A simple, green mobile home, set between the chicken hutch and the cows, serves as both kitchen and farm office. Every Saturday, families come to the farm, often by bike, to fill their bags with produce or the harvest from the orchard, be it vine fruits, root vegetables, beef and chicken. The fresh food now accounts for around 60 percent of 500 people's diet, say its leaders proudly.

Known as Herenboerderij, or People's Farming, the guiding principle is that "everything revolves around the needs and riches of nature, even while using new technologies," said its founder Geert van der Veer. The collective farm idea is groundbreaking in the Netherlands, where intensive farming methods have made it the world's second biggest agricultural exporter after the United States, according to the CBS Dutch Central Statistics Bureau.

But, with about a quarter of the Netherlands lying below the level of the North Sea, the small country is particularly vulnerable to global warming, in which scientists say agriculture plays a key role. A UN report warned recently that the way the world uses land to produce food has to change urgently to curb global warming, or else food security and health will be at risk. "Something has to fundamentally change in our system of production and our

way of feeding ourselves if we want to keep our feet dry," said Van der Veer.

'Has to change'

Dutch Agriculture Minister Carola Schouten in June unveiled a new 135-million-euro aid plan to help farmers transition to "circular" agriculture. The aim, according to the plan, is to "no longer produce as cheaply as possible, but to produce with the least loss of raw materials and with management of the soil, water and nature". A second collective farm, in the central Netherlands, is now due to open. Van der Veer stressed that embracing simpler ways of farming did not mean shunning new technology.

"The path that farming has taken over the years has narrowed, and we are now up against the wall," he said. "We have to go back to the farming of the 1950s, when we still knew what we were doing, while using today's technologies," he said. At his feet, dozens of chickens help to maintain the plants that grow between the trees, fertilizing the soil with their manure - although one day they, too, will be used for food. Soon the poultry will be joined by a robot that can sense when fruit is ripe, as well as a drone that will survey the fields to support the farmer and reduce the need for manpower. "What is certain is that farming absolutely has to change," said Korting. — AFP

Not your father's Peronists: Why Macri flopped with youth

For Luis Joaquin Caro, who was about 2 years old when Argentina last defaulted on its debt in 2001, casting his vote for left-leaning Peronist candidate Alberto Fernandez in the country's recent primary election was a no-brainer. "During the Kirchner years, I lived very well," he said, referring to what now seems like a bygone era of his young life before four years of spending cuts and austerity measures under President Mauricio Macri.

"Today, it's not like that," said Caro, who is from a working-class part of Buenos Aires Province. The 21-year-old said he had always seen former President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner and her late husband former President Nestor Kirchner - whose consecutive terms spanned 2003 to 2015 - as champions of the workers.

Cristina Kirchner, a polarizing figure in Argentina, is the running mate of Fernandez, whose landslide victory

over Macri in the Aug. 11 primary wrong-footed pollsters and shocked investors, who worry that Argentina may fail once again to pay its debts if the left returns to power. Argentine markets plunged into a nosedive last week amid growing fears about a rerun of "Kirchnerismo", when Argentina had currency controls and other interventionist policies.

Caro's sentiments are emblematic of a groundswell of support for Fernandez among younger voters which, while not altogether unexpected for pollsters, shocked them in its magnitude. Part of the challenge for pollsters in Argentina was that young voters, one of the demographics most impacted by high unemployment, are less likely to have a conventional phone where canvassers can reach them - a factor also cited by polling firms in Britain and the United States after upsets in recent years.

For Caro and many other young voters in Argentina, talk of the pain surrounding the 2001 crisis was eclipsed by generous social benefits and subsidies under the Kirchners' that helped pluck their families from poverty after the debt default. "The years of Kirchnerism that I lived during my childhood, I lived very well and maybe at that time, I did not realize it," said Lucila Servelli, 16, who voted for the first time on Sunday, though voting is not compulsory for 16 to 18 year olds. "But comparing it with now, many things have changed. Now, my family had to give up many things," said Servelli, who was not born when Argentina default-

ed in 2001. Young voters have far less in common with Macri, whose term has focused on free-market reforms by stimulating foreign investment and a promised economic recovery that failed to materialize, said political analyst Julio Burdman. Macri's image is saddled with resentment at high unemployment, especially among younger Argentines, he added. To make matters worse, salaries have eroded significantly. That is an extra sting for young voters who are new to the workforce and feeling the pinch in their own pockets for the first time.

For others like 16-year-old Pilar Gil Navarro, the support for Kirchnerism is not just about economics. For her, the Kirchnerist agenda, which is more liberal on social issues, is more in line with her values. "One of the issues that I want to deal with is legal, safe and free abortion," Navarro said. "In the Macri government, there is no Ministry of Health, showing that a lot would have to happen to legalize abortion, which is something Fernandez said is important as a matter of public health."

There is also a certain cache attached to Kirchnerism, which counts high-profile actors and musicians among its supporters, analysts said. Straight-laced Macri, whose supporters are mostly over 50, is viewed as a polar opposite from the Kirchnerismo image of questioning the status quo and confronting an established order. "That, for a young person, is much more seductive than a conservative agenda," said Facundo Nejankis, director of polling firm Opina Argentina. — Reuters

France's Ecole 42: Start-up IT school tears up rule book

On an August morning in Paris, when most of the city is in an advanced state of summer torpor, hundreds of young men and women are sweating it out in the third week of a gruelling month-long endurance test. While the trial is called the "piscine" (swimming pool) and towels dot the ultra-modern building, the contest is not about physical prowess. Welcome instead to the tryouts for Ecole 42, a free computer coding college founded by French telecoms billionaire Xavier Niel in 2013 to help young people find work in IT or, better still, become their own bosses.

Named after the offbeat answer to "the ultimate question of life" in Douglas Adams' comic classic "The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy," the ultra-modern college, with neither teachers nor conventional tuition, quickly gained cult status. Around 40,000 people apply each year for one of roughly 1,000 spots on the program.

Around 3,000 make it to the daunting "piscine" stage, in which the candidates spend 10 to 16 hours a day over four weeks completing projects and doing exams. Some, like Aristide Rivet-Tissot, even sleep and shower on-site - hence the towels. "When you're here, you're so immersed that you sometimes forget the outside world exists!" the bleary-eyed 19-year-old told AFP as he greeted his parents, who had travelled up from the countryside to offer support and collect his washing.

Dropouts welcome

When Niel announced his plan for a free coding college

open to all, including school dropouts - 40 percent of the students do not have the school leavers' "baccalaureat" - France's main IT employers federation gave a muted response, noting that the country already had an abundance of engineering colleges. Six years later, Ecole 42, which is based entirely on project work and peer learning, has disproved the doubters with a 100 percent employment rate among graduates.

Describing a visit to 42 in Paris in a promotional video, Evan Spiegel, the CEO of social media giant Snap, declared: "You feel like you're walking into a school from the future!" Now Niel, who founded the world's biggest start-up incubator in Paris in 2017, is taking his revolutionary model global. After founding a Silicon Valley sister college in 2016, he has his sights set on Rio de Janeiro, Novosibirsk, Tokyo and a slew of other cities, as part of a plan to have 20 partner schools in 14 countries by 2020.

75,000 unfilled jobs

A survey of businesses by France's unemployment administration last year found there were more than 75,000 vacancies in the IT sector. While completing the course's 21 levels takes on average three years, many students are headhunted beforehand. Bastien Botella, co-founder of Clevy, a start-up that develops chatbots, left 42 one-third of the way through the course to take a web design job. A former hotel manager who failed his baccalaureat, Botella had previously been turned down by several traditional IT colleges. "42 was a turning point in my life," said the 33-year-old, whose staff of 21 includes six fellow "42ers" working alongside graduates of some of France's top engineering colleges.

'School from the future'

The school's inclusive approach marks it out in a country which preaches "liberty, equality, fraternity" but which was the worst performer among 36 countries, including the

US and Britain, in a 2015 OECD study on social advancement through education. Fadia Zementzali told AFP she applied after being fired from her job as a telephone saleswoman because she wears a Muslim headscarf. "Here I was welcomed as a human being, not as a veiled woman," said the chatty 31-year-old, who was admitted to 42 in April. The cross-community lure is plain to see in the kaleidoscope of faces clustered around gleaming 27-inch Apple screens in the vast computer room where the "piscine" trials are held. "The digital sector, as we've seen at 42, acts as a social elevator. You have people from very different horizons," said 42 director Sophie Viger. Despite not being certified by the state, the program has won plaudits from politicians across the spectrum. "It has brought innovation into our education system - which is what we need and it's wonderful," then finance minister, now president, Emmanuel Macron gushed on Facebook after visiting the school in 2015. — AFP



In this photo taken on Feb 19, 2019, students work on computers at the "Ecole 42" computer programming school in Paris. — AFP