

# Trump's rise reflects flaws of US education, says expert

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### Primaries GOP 'reaps what it sowed' with contender's popularity.

Anne Hyland

Former US State Department director of policy Anne-Marie Slaughter has joined the chorus of criticism of Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump stating he's a product of not only the failings of the Republican Party but also the country's education system.

Her criticism comes after Republican presidential candidates Mitt Romney and John McCain this week both denounced Mr Trump as a danger to democracy and called him a "fraud". "You reap what you sow," said Ms Slaughter, who worked as a director of policy planning under Secretary of State Hillary Clinton from 2009 to 2011. "You can't endorse that kind of talk and behaviour and be surprised when you get a candidate who appeals to people's very worst instincts."

Among his many controversial statements, Mr Trump has said he would deport 11 million undocumented immigrants from the US.

Ms Slaughter said Mr Trump's success highlighted the need to improve

US education standards. "I do also think that this is what happens when you have a democracy of people who are not well-educated," she told *AFR Weekend*. "The Trump audience are white men who graduated from high schools that have taught them little and who have not been part of any more engaged, intelligent discourse."

Ms Slaughter, who is now president of think tank New America, is in Australia on a number of speaking engagements discussing US foreign policy and her recent book *Unfinished Business*. The latter presents a vision for true gender equality at home and at work.

A return to the State Department would not be ruled out by Ms Slaughter should Hillary Clinton become the next US president. Her foreign policy observations come amid a growing furor in the US over the Mr Trump's success as the current front-runner for the Republican Party's presidential nomination.

Ms Slaughter also raised concerns about the US policy towards the Middle East, particularly Syria, where she said it's viewed as a "paper tiger".

"Diplomacy that is not backed by a credible use of force ultimately can't succeed."

"Right now, most people in the Middle East think we're a paper tiger, which means they'll go to the Russians, or the Saudis, or to whoever will fight. We have to not be seen as a country



Anne-Marie Slaughter questions Donald Trump's mandate. PHOTO: LOUISE KENNERLEY

that uses force reflexively or unilaterally but a country that does want to play by the rules and a country that if you push us hard, we'll push back."

She argues that one of President Barack Obama's "worst" decisions was not attacking the Syrian government after its use of chemical weapons in 2013. "As long as [Syria's Bashar] Assad's government thinks we will never do anything against him, why should he bargain, why should he come to the table?"

The US's pivot towards Asia also came at the expense of the focus on the Middle East, said Ms Slaughter. "Secret-

ary Clinton and President Obama would both say the rebalancing towards Asia was one of their great achievements. I agree Asia is enormously important. The Middle East is still our neighbourhood in a way that Asia is not."

Ms Slaughter praised Mr Obama's foreign policy milestones in helping bring about a democratic revolution in Burma; curbing the Iranian nuclear program and restoring Cuban relations: "He has restored the idea that we can lead through institutions not against them," she said.