

## Power Dressing: The politics of fashion

The art of being taken seriously has never been so difficult

By [Grace Howarth](#), Fashion Editor (2015/16)  
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With the presidential election looming, the latest quips, satirical articles and political arguments being thrown about by the public and indeed party leaders, seem to be the only things that news feeds consist of these days. As November approaches, the race to see who will become the next president is on everyone's minds for many reasons. Fashion and style choices may not be among most people's top priorities and are arguably of small bearing in the grand scheme of the presidential elections, but they are aspects worthy of some attention never the less.

Back in February the former Prime Minister David Cameron made plain his disapproval of labour leader Jeremy Corbyn's lack of a proper suit and done up tie, and generally unkempt appearance during a debate in the House of Commons. Despite having no connection to the NHS statistics being discussed at the time, the comment clearly proved that a smart, sharp and high end suit is still an expectation in many people's eyes when it comes to a politician's apparel. This expectation is a fairly new phenomenon.

The idea that the smarter and better dressed a politician is, the more supporters from entire demographics he or she will gain, makes sense. Of course a person can do their job just as well dressed in a dated, frumpy suit of indeterminate colour as they would, dressed by the tailors of Savile Row; it is the impression the clothes give of the wearer that is important and most people, especially politicians, need to make a good impression.

Before TV existed this was arguably not such a big deal; fairly few people would have much of an idea what style choices or designer a politician wore, being only able to base their opinions on grainy black and white photos in the newspapers. The age of technology has of course changed things significantly. Self-awareness and self-image are of great importance, especially if you want to attract followers.

Nowadays politicians are very much in the know. They are aware that the public seek leaders whose style and dress is appealing. They want a leader they can relate to and feel at ease with. The bold, red, Ralph Lauren pant suit worn by Hillary Clinton at her first face to face debate last Monday, speaks for itself. The warm bright colour is inviting, TV friendly and most of all, very top level professional. This staid style of suit is often worn by Clinton, but it does not perhaps reach out to all demographics, such as younger voters for example. However the sturdy 'pantsuit' has come under some criticism, with the former editor of *Vanity Fair* Tina Brown highlighting its lack of authenticity, which she believes matters more than likability.

It's not enough these days, to look and be nice: a politician needs to not only create a stylish image but create an atypical one too, if they hope to appeal to young voters in any case. However if the majority of those who are eligible and use their vote are over the age of 30, then Clinton's choice works. A politician in a democratic country need only cater to the majority and here she is succeeding.

Appealing to millions of people however is understandably difficult, but none make it look as easy and effortless as First Lady Michelle Obama. Favouring the clothing lines of some lesser known designers such

as Jason Wu and Isabel Toledo as well as the big names in the fashion world such as Alexander McQueen and Givenchy, Obama's stylistic choices have made her somewhat of a style icon in the fashion world. Appearing on the cover of *Vogue* twice, Obama's penchant for flared skirts and a bright colour palette appeals to all demographics.

Back in July Obama gave an excellent speech, endorsing Clinton at the 2016 Democratic convention.

Dressed most appropriately in a stunning blue, cap sleeved dress with a flared skirt and sleek shoulder length wavy hair, the first lady's attire epitomised the perfect professional dress. Obama's style is a combination of warm and serious, thus, she continually wins in the style stakes.



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