



US Presidential Election 2016 - A New Approach to the White House

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Executive Summary

The 2016 presidential election was a turning point in the history of U.S. Class and race identities dominated the campaign, while areas like foreign policy, defence and security took a backseat.

The US stature in the world order has diminished in recent years. The discontent in the domestic economy with increased inequality, stagnant wages and widespread poverty was critical in building up the anti-establishment momentum during 2016 Presidential election campaign. The wide appeal of anti-establishment by the candidacy of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders and the popular resentment towards Hillary Clinton revealed the disgruntled mood of the American masses. The long established doctrines of the parties underwent a change in this year's campaign - Republicans, who promoted free trade had a candidate riding on nationalistic fervour, calling for more protectionism and in an uneasy coalition with businesses and social conservatives; Democrats, perceived as pro-middle class was championing the cause of big businesses. This dilemma reinvigorated the Libertarian (polling at 8%) and Green (polling at 1%) parties in the US.

This is a primer about the 2016 U.S Presidential election campaign. It chronicles the major electioneering trends of the 2016 U.S Presidential election campaign and the key domestic and foreign policy concerns.

CPPR-Centre for Strategic Studies based in Kochi engaged itself with experts to gain insights into the international implications of the US presidential election to articulate a wide spectrum of thinking on the subject. The intent was to present an overview of the US presidential election campaign and the impact of the positions taken by the presidential candidates on multiple issues. The primer includes the main issue and themes in the campaign, political parties and candidates in the fray and their policies and approach to these issues in order to develop an in-depth understanding of the changes in the election process over the years and the country's prospective foreign policy overtures.

Furthermore, the changing trends in electioneering and its effects on the pluralist-liberal nature of the American society and party regime are analyzed. The dynamics involved in the presidential election - party primaries and conventions in the run-up to the final election in November 2016 are analysed to help offer varying views on the various socio-political and

economic concerns that influence the US electorate. A reflection on the growing anti-establishment sentiments towards the political system was thus made.

The legacy of Obama's foreign policy was fraught with many challenges, despite positive developments in the relationship with Iran and Cuba and building consensus to ratify the 2015 Paris climate deal. These include the failure to control terrorist outfits, failed tactics on North Korea and for a nuclear-free world, uncertainties over Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and keeping Russia-China partnership under check. The ongoing stalemate in Syria, and Brexit and the worsening Ukrainian crisis will prove to be contentious issues for the future US President. An appraisal of American foreign policy - both the political and security & trade and commerce aspects is made to assess how historians will record the legacy of the Obama administration.

The recent past did witness Indo- U.S bi-lateral relations scaling to greater levels of convalescence. The US and India - the world's oldest and largest democracies - consider each other as 'natural allies', united by converging strategic visions. The bedrock of this liaison is rooted in the steady progress of the Indo-US strategic partnership on economy, politics, diplomacy and security. Economic prosperity and military strategic security need to work in unison to scale up the Indo-US bilateral relationship. An assessment of ways to uphold a constructive relationship to endure the current upswing in the bi-lateral ties with a new leader at its helm is thus studied.

Through this forum, CPPR CSS seeks to encourage leading strategists, experts & academicians to get involved in the deliberations and constructively enhance participation by civil society in security and strategic matters of global significance. It will further serve as a platform to help influence decision makers in the country with a renewed strategy of engagement vis-à-vis newly elected Presidential candidate.

US Election 2016 and the Startling Trends in US Politics

Professor KC Abraham

The 2016 US presidential election has heralded a change in the nature and content of American politics. The symptoms have been visible in the party primaries and are certain to witness in the ensuing presidential and Congressional elections. There is an explicit reordering of political thinking in America. It has produced some un-American or unusual trends in the American political system - jingoism, personal slandering or scandal mongering, anti establishment etc.

Arousal and Stirring of National Spirit

The election of 2016 is inadvertently stirring up the US national spirit. Hitherto, American jingoism was used to assert American dominance in the world arena, and many a times against its perceived enemies. Both Donald Trump, the presumptive Republican nominee, and the Democratic nomination challenger Bernie Sanders carry the spirit of Americanism, but from different perspectives. Both appeal to the disgruntled Americans smitten by economic recession. Trump's Americanism is based on exclusiveness, while Sanders's nationalism is inclusive.

Trump sees the cause of all the contemporary American ills in Hispanics and to root this malady out wants the infectious Mexicans to be ejected out of the US land. His call for the building of walls to block the entry of undesired people from border countries, especially the Mexicans, is nothing but a manifested racism. He claims that the outsiders are robbing the American people of their well-being -their job, income and security. However, Sanders's national interest is based on equity. Hence, he calls for equality of opportunity to all living on the American soil.

Growing Resentment against Establishments

The 2016 US election is marked by popular discontent toward the establishments -the party and the government. If Hillary Clinton stands for and stands by the establishment, her primary challenger Bernie Sanders and Republican opponent Donald Trump question the credibility and fairness of the government and their respective party establishments. Both contend that their parties are captives of 'vested interests'. Trump succeeded in this open challenge to the

party boss and overcoming their disenchantment towards his policy and personality, became the undisputed winner. His opposition to the government establishments is that they over care, over tax and over interfere.

If Trump could overcome his party bosses in Washington, Sanders could not surprise the party establishment and that is evident from the number of super delegates that support him, a meagre 48 against the overwhelming 574 for Clinton. Rightly, Sanders and his ardent supporters are vehement in their attack of the Democratic Party establishment, on the unfair privilege of the coterie that controls it.

Trump could steamroll through the party primaries and now, the party that was nauseated by his personality and pronouncements is compelled to accept his candidacy, through a risk. He overcame the party opposition, but the party could not. In the Democratic Party, Sanders could not overcome the party Goliath.

Bernie Sanders rode on his popular attack on the economic establishment controlled by the Wall Street. The American youth, overwhelmingly, is attracted and allured to his 'left position', when he called for social equality, economic equity, wage hike, job security for Americans and breaking the dominating forte of the Wall Street. He is opposed to the flow of American capital to outside, but that too generate employment to Americans.

Un-American and Un-Americanism

The presidential campaign of 2016 is characterised by un-American elements, both in style and content. Social segregation that had hounded American quality till 1970s, but in a much subdued degree in later years, has become a talking agenda for this election. Trump's wrath at the contemporary American problems is directed against the Mexicans and Muslims. Even in the height of 9/11 terror attack, no American leader called the Muslims 'villains of global terrorism' and hence called for a ban on their entry to the country or the surveillance of American Muslims.

Public expression of contempt for casting aspersions on a community is a blot on the much-acclaimed American pluralism. It is not only un-American, but more so anti-American.

Un-Americanism is intent in the foreign policy pronouncements of the presidential contenders, especially, Donald Trump and to a lesser degree, Bernie Sanders. There is a general sense of submission among the Americans that 'American Pride' has been on the wane

in the recent years. American addiction with ‘policeman of the world’ and the rightful ‘arbitrator of the world order’ has received a series of setbacks, and now it seems to be in a helpless withdrawal syndrome. Sensing the mood of Americans and responding to the declining conditions of the American economy impacted by its costly engagements abroad, Trump coined the slogans ‘America First’, ‘Make American Economy Strong Again’ and ‘Heavy Duty on Chinese Made Goods’. He goes to the extent of offering an olive branch to ‘evil’ nations like North Korea and Iran. On the other hand, Bernie Sanders takes the principled stand of a ‘non-interventionist’, ‘non-policing’ America.

Interestingly, both Trump and Sanders oppose trade treaties like Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and Trans-Atlantic Free Trade Area America (TAFTA) initiated with the countries of the Pacific and South Asian regions, and the European Union for further easing of the trade movement among these countries. They call for the cancellation of these agreements, contenting that they would adversely affect the American economy, but benefit the other partners against American interest. Sanders opposes the unrestricted flow of American capital to cheaper markets. He is committed to increased wages, closing the income gap, free education upto graduation and total health care. His virulent attack on the impregnable Wall Street is the echo of the ironic situation of one per cent versus 99 per cent (one per cent of the super rich dominating 99 per cent of the rest). This attack on the American ‘mantra’ of free trade, free market and free capital coupled with a withdrawn America, is nothing but ‘un-Americanism’.

Negativism and Scandal Mongering

The 2016 US election campaign is dominated by negativism and personal slandering. There is hardly any serious debate or discussion between the two presumptive candidates or among the leaders of the parties on various issues engaging American society and economy, least the troubled regions of the world. Unsavoury words and undignified language are hurled at each other. The body language of Trump does not smack of a leader of stature and dignity. His utterance lacks qualities of poise and class. His understanding of the world and issues goes begging. On the other hand, Hillary Clinton carries less conviction in her speeches. Integrity of her office is under serious question on many counts, especially her clandestine relationship with the Wall Street.

The two leaders do not dare to debate on serious problems engaging the American society nor do they present any credible solutions. Instead or due to lack of it, they trade accusations

and allegations. Hillary merrily calls Trump a 'fraud' and 'unfit' to be the President of America. Trump retorts angrily with 'liar' and 'most corrupt public person'.

Conclusion

The voting behaviour of the American people in the ensuing presidential and Congressional elections is more than a one-million question. Assumptions of the probable result could be formulated in the light of the personality of the two presumptive candidates and their policy perspectives. In the true tradition of the American presidential election, the candidacy of Donald Trump stands lesser chance of going ahead with his pronouncements and speeches. His economic policies are shallow gimmicks, social policies are divisive and, at times, racist and his foreign policy erratic and irresponsible. If the American discomfort goes astray in a decisive way, an adventure risk President will enter the White House. Adventure could lead to disaster not only for the US but also for the whole world.

Hillary Clinton, though her official integrity more mistrusted than trusted, has wider acceptance across America. She has emerged as an inevitable alternative to the ignominious candidature in Trump. She is compelled to include certain crucial programmes of Bernie Sanders to satisfy the demands of his supporters and thereby win their votes. Sanders himself has declared that his mission is to stop Trump from becoming the President of America. He and his supporters will be compelled to accept the lesser evil. The Orlando type massacre or social turmoil can hold chances for Trump's victory. The party establishment facilitated the winning of Clinton, though Sanders stands much ahead of her in general public opinion poll. Trump walked over the Republican establishment. This constitutes the irony of the US democracy.

Donald Trump on a Slippery Road –Part 1

Professor KC Abraham

The candidacy of Donald Trump was like a bolt from the blue for the party and the nation. Unlike erstwhile Republican presidential candidates or his rivals in party primaries, Trump does not have an official political profile. His only profile is that of a ‘wealthy celebrity’ - his wealth from being a realtor and his celebrity status from being a well-known face on an American reality TV show. This status coupled with his fierce rhetoric amused the American public, especially the Republican rank and file, and by steamrolling every other known veteran Republican candidate and challenging the GOP establishment, Trump won the party primaries. The GOP convention was forced to accept his candidature with much scepticism.

However, Trump seems to be on his way to self-destruction. Venomous rhetoric that he unleashed successfully during the primaries was not favourably accepted across the country. There was widespread protest against his candidature at the primary stage itself. For an interim period spanning the eve of the convention and a month after the formal acceptance of his candidature, Trump scaled down the intensity of his attack on different social sections.

Undisputed Candidate of the GOP

Trump’s blaming propaganda for the contemporary American ills appealed to the overwhelming Republican members of his own social and class nature and won him the Republican nomination. However, these tactics failed to draw the support of the diverse American society and fetch him a pan-American approval.

Trump came to the centre stage of American politics riding on the waves of popular discontentment against the government and the Republican Party. Yet, he miserably failed to articulate and capitalise on the general apathy towards eight years of Democratic rule. Instead, Trump is overworking to make his own trap of unpopularity.

There are many inbuilt deficiencies in his candidature. Trump summarily lacks a comprehensive vision for the future of the American people and for America as a nation in the global system. He lacks a proper comprehension of the American society, American history and complex world politics. This manifests in his pronouncements and comments.

Alienating Social Groups and Shrinking Support Base

The American society is a confederation of multiple interests, beliefs and religious denominations. The presidential candidate ought to woo every social segment, however in minority they are, and humour every interest. The minorities are decisive in the pluralist democracy of the nation. The irony is that instead of appeasing these divergent groups, Trump has alienated them with his brash statements and comments. Every word he utters and every statement he pronounces have been criticised and abhorred.

Disapproval and criticism of his policy and conduct are not confined to the opposition. The Independents and an influential section of his own party are also at loggerheads with him. Leading Republican leaders are either silent or hesitant in backing Trump, lest they might lose their chances in the Congressional election.

Donald Trump, with his virulent attack on the Hispanics, has evoked a sense of fear and insecurity in the minds of immigrants across the country. His prime target is the Mexicans whom he calls criminals. He accused that out of 23 million Mexicans in the US, 11 million were undocumented and two million were with criminal records. Trump went on to state that upon election, he would deport them from day one. In between, he paid a dramatic visit to the Mexican capital for a conciliatory dialogue with the Mexican President on the construction of the border wall. It proved to be a tragic comedy, as his wishful thinking was snubbed by the Mexican President. Before the day had ended, Trump resumed his verbal insult on Mexican immigrants.

Despite his repeated attempts to placate the African Americans, they overwhelmingly support Hillary Clinton. His hardcore immigration policy has estranged the minority communities. It is not surprising that more than 90 per cent of the minorities are opposed to Trump. His disparaging comments on women, Hillary Clinton in particular, have weaned away a good number of women voters. Leading women personalities of America have already announced their support to Hillary Clinton.

Unsolicited Member of the Party

It is no surprise that Trump is a stranger to the Republican family. The party establishment is reluctant to support him wholeheartedly. Many factors make him an unwelcome nominee. First, he neither holds a post in the party establishment nor a public office representing the party. He is therefore looked upon as an upstart. Second, he came to win the party

nomination by challenging the party establishment. To stir up his popularity, Trump mocked and even challenged the GOP leadership. The third and the most significant factor is that Trump is out of time with the traditional policy of the party. His economic, social and foreign policies are antithetical to the liberal, market-led, pro-globalisation, world-policing policies of the Republican Party. His slogans- 'America First' and 'American Wealth for Americans' - are denounced by the top names of the party.

Disdain for his incapacity to hold the post of the American President is so eloquent among the intelligentsia that about 50 leading figures associated with policy making, most of them Republicans, have come out with a statement denouncing Trump's candidature. They have branded him 'unfit' for the American presidency. They see him as a high-risk candidate, and if elected, an adventurous President. His praise for the Russian President Vladimir Putin, and willingness to talk to the North Korean leadership, have deepened scepticism in his leadership. The party views him with more cynicism than confidence. The GOP leadership is disunited about him. Paul Ryan, the Speaker of the US House of Representatives, is yet to commit to Trump fully. Some of the Congressmen have openly criticised their party candidate, while a few have turned hostile to him and announced support to Hillary Clinton. Unlike the propaganda controlled and managed by the family that 'Republicans are united behind Trump', it is in reality a fragmented party. According to the latest survey, only 41 per cent of the party members are enthusiastic about the campaign.

Donald Trump on a Slippery Road– Part II

Professor KC Abraham

Donald Trump has deepened his political trench with the exposure of the 2005 video tapes, revealing his promiscuity with women. With the mainstream media in hot pursuit of his blood, his party leaders led by influential Congressman Paul Ryan are deserting him. These include the former presidential candidate John McCain and former Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice. There is a continuing inflow of Republican leaders to the anti-Trump wagon.

Late Climb-down and Moderation - Exercises in Futility

Surveys throughout the campaign process say that a large majority of youth and radicals are opposed to Trump. There were vociferous protests against him in many places of his campaign. Of late, he played two cards, one to court the youth and the other to appease the African Americans. Trump publicly endorsed the rights of the LGBT community, sensing the mood of the large majority of youth, even from among the evangelists. His rationale for the support was that banning gay rights was a foreign ideology borrowed from Saudi Arabia. However, this polemic has alienated the extreme right whites and church hierarchy. Trump went out of his way to woo the African Americans by expressing sympathy for their life conditions, especially low income, unemployment and poor education. For a man who ridiculed 'Obama Care' and scorned at welfare programmes, his promise of more jobs for the community members to improve their income and life status does not seem to have gone down with them. Moreover, the coloured populations, the African Americans in particular, have been victims of white racism, which have led to fatalities in recent times. It is not surprising that Trump, who is the alter ego of the ultra-white racist, cannot gain an iota of trust from the minorities.

Trump was reckless when he criticised the gun control policy of Hillary Clinton and called for the use of Second Amendment by people, inadvertently asking them to use gun against Hillary. The media and critics were quick enough to interpret it as an invitation to violence. This has aroused genuine apprehension in the minds of well-meaning Americans about the risk of this man becoming the US President, who will also be the Commander-in-Chief of the US army. His abrasive comments on minorities, immigration population and women have cast

doubts on his credibility. His unorthodox social and cultural policies, like on the LGBT community, augur ill with right-wing Christian fundamentalists.

Trump's economic policy of protectionism and anti-globalisation is not acceptable to the business establishments and multi-national corporations that fund the Republican Party. 'Isolationism', a deviation from the traditional American foreign policy, has irked the policy thinkers and core leaders of the Republican Party.

War Within and Without

It is rather an irony that Trump, who emerged as a rebellious candidate to the Republican Party establishment and won the nomination with no challengeable rival, has transformed the party into a rebelling band. With prominent leaders denouncing him and even joining the rival camp, Trump is forced to open a double-faced war front - one against his rival outside and the other within his own camp. It is a war within and without. It maybe unprecedented in the US presidential election history that a party candidate is fighting the election without an army and machinery (party support) with deserters, betrayers and rebels aplenty.

With Trump declaring open war on the Republican establishment, the Congressional contestants from the party are in a Shakespearian dilemma, to be or not to be a Trumpian. Being a protagonist, the candidate would lose the votes of liberal Republicans, conservative evangelists, minorities and neutrals, and being an antagonist would cost the support of radical Republicans, white working class and progressive evangelists. In either case, the ensuing presidential and Congressional elections will witness the sordid drama of mutual annihilation in the Republican Party. Therefore, the inevitable choice left is to swim or sink together. Supporting Trump will cast a devastating impact on the electoral fortunes of many a Republicans.

Unfit Candidate & Missed Opportunity

What looked like a close contest is turning out to be a Trumpian Tragedy. Lately, public opinion divide has risen to an average rate of 6.5 per cent. The transformation came after the video revelation about Trump and his unimpressive performance in the second presidential debate.

Trump failed to exploit the Wiki Leaks disclosures on Clinton's email handling and the Democratic Party national committee's manoeuvres against Bernie Sanders to his advantage. Her popularity rise is, by default, the contribution of Trump demeaning himself.

Donald Trump with his intrinsic personality traits maybe the most unqualified and unfit candidate to lead America in the fast moving unpredictable world order. The nation deserves a statesman with a clear vision for the country and the world. A candidate with coherent socio-economic and foreign policies to resolve contemporary American discontentment would have been a strong rival to Hillary Clinton. The strength of Clinton's candidature is drawn from the weakness of Trump's candidacy. Some extraordinary events have to take place or major issues crop up, adversely affecting Clinton, to bring the boon of victory to Trump. Eventually, Donald Trump will tumble out of the 2016 presidential contest and American political history.

US Presidential Election: Key Issues and Themes

Dr Josukutty CA

The US presidential election 2016 has been the most polarising, uncivil and negative in recent times. The divergent positions of the parties and candidates on various issues offer different solutions to the problems and visions about the future of America. Economy, immigration, foreign policy, national security and terrorism, race, trade and gun control constitute the most widely discussed themes of this election. Education, health, environment, abortion, treatment of racial and ethnic minorities and rights of gay and transgender also concern the American public.

Economy has been an important and divisive issue in all US elections. According to the Pew Research Centre Survey conducted in June 2016, 84 per cent of registered voters say that the issue of economy will be very important to them in making their decision about who to vote for in the election. What make economic problems distinct during this election are the difficulties of gross inequality and economic stagnation experienced by most of the American population. The economic issues are spread over household income, taxes, jobs and other related concerns. There has been no meaningful recovery in household income as the wages have been stagnant since the recession. This is despite the fact that the American economy has improved impressively under Obama. The Census Bureau reports on income and poverty found that real middle-class incomes in America grew a phenomenal 5.2 per cent, and that the poverty rate fell by the largest percentage in nearly 50 years. Trump's economic plan promises to create 25 million new jobs and grow the economy at an annual rate of at least 3.5 percent. He described the plan as "the most pro-growth, pro-jobs, pro-family plan put forth perhaps in the history of our country". But, in reality, Trump does not have a clear-cut plan. Increasing middle class income is also the central idea of Hillary Clinton's economic plan.

Hillary Clinton proposes to raise taxes on the top one percent of earners -those earning more than US \$732,000 a year -while largely leaving tax rates the same for taxpayers with smaller incomes, new standard tax deduction for small businesses, additional deductions for start-ups and removal of tax breaks for companies that send jobs overseas. Donald Trump supports significant business tax cuts, reducing the number of income tax brackets and cutting taxes at all income levels, with the largest benefits going to the highest-income households. Jobs

remain a top priority for Americans even as the unemployment rate in the US returns to pre-recession levels. Since October 2015, unemployment has hovered close to 5 percent. Hillary Clinton advocates for investment in American infrastructure as a means of creating ‘good-paying’ jobs and increasing wages. She proposes special job plans for the disabled. Trump has a nationalist economist agenda to bring back jobs. He opposes outsourcing, further trade liberalisation, including Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), and stands for stricter visa controls. Both the candidates propose to bring back outsourced jobs, particularly in the manufacturing sector. The Politico-Harvard Poll shows 85 percent of the Republicans say that free trade has cost the US more jobs than it has created, compared to 54 percent of the Democrats. Green Party nominee Jill Stein wants a more progressive tax system and supports tax reform that helps create jobs, economic efficiencies and innovation and opposes tax favours of corporate and wealthy interests. Libertarian nominee Gary Johnson has proposed federal consumption tax, considers job aright and proposes to write off student debt.

Next to economy, 80 per cent of registered voters consider that the issue of terrorism and internal security will be important to their vote. This is a major point of contention between Hillary and Trump. Trump proposes the use of tactical nuclear and other weapons on the Islamic State (IS), the surveillance of mosques and closing them, if needed, a ban on the entry of Muslims into the US and even torture as a means to elicit information from terrorists. Hillary refuses to hold responsible the entire Muslim community for terror strikes and proposes to fight home-grown terrorism with the help of the members of the Muslim community. On immigration, in contrast to the Democratic Party’s proposition for comprehensive reforms with a pathway to citizenship, Trump plans to deport all illegal immigrants and build a wall across Mexico to ban further entry. According to the Pew Research Centre Survey, 70 per cent of registered voters say that immigration is very important to their vote, up from 41 per cent in September 2012 and 54 per cent in May 2008.

Consequent to recurring gun violence and killings, gun control is more important now than the previous two elections. Every year, more than 30,000 Americans have their lives cut short by guns. The Democrats stand for effective background checks and control over guns to make dealers, manufactures and users responsible. For the Republicans, gun wielding is sacrosanct conventionally and constitutionally. With growing incidents of police atrocities against blacks, hardening positions on immigration and fear of national security, race is increasingly an important issue. Hillary proposes to implement a set of best practices to prevent police-involved shootings. Trump himself is accused as racist because of his remarks on Mexicans as

rapists, Muslims as terrorists, questioning the integrity of minority judges hearing Trump University cases and his early attitude towards blacks.

Hillary supports free college education through state and family funding, whereas Trump leaves it to the states to adopt appropriate local policies. Unlike Trump, the problems of women, disabled, gay, lesbian and transgender people are given more attention by Hillary. High pricing of new and generic drugs is a major election issue. Trump wants to repeal Obama Care (Affordable Care Act) and reform healthcare based on free market principles. The Democrats support the Act, promise to protect it or move to a more generous programme. They support combating climate change and have endorsed the Paris agreement. Trump considers global warming a hoax, opposes the Paris agreement and wants to cancel the Climate Action Plan and keep the oil and gas industry free from environmental regulations.

These issues and themes are apparently quite normal and positive during elections. However, what makes them unique, and to an extent alarming, is the failure of the major political parties to address them and the entry of class and identity politics with a dangerous mix of racial and narrow nationalistic overtones in the election campaigns.

The Republicans have been principled advocates of economic liberalism: free markets, free trade and open immigration. They supported trade legislations such as the North American Free Trade Agreement, recent trade promotion authority, bank deregulation that caused the financial crisis of 2008 and tax reduction for the wealthy. They stood for undermining the power of labour unions and reducing social services for the poor. These policies run counter to the interests of the working class. There is a big conflict within the Republican Party between wealthy business interests and poor working class. In this fight, the working-class base expresses a clear preference for more nationalist economic policies. The Democratic Party, traditionally seen as a party of the common man, has also embraced pro-market policies and business interests, free immigration, complicity in bank deregulations and ignored labour concerns. But the more important problem with the Democrats related to this election is that the party has embraced identity politics as its core value.

These developments have two important consequences -one, division within the mainstream political parties between the elites and the rank and file, and two, the return of class and identity to US politics with undercurrents of white nationalism and racialism.

The division within the mainstream parties has resulted in passionate support for the socialist positions of Bernie Sanders during the primaries, ground level support for Trump among the white working and middle classes, irrespective of the position of the party leadership, the perception that Hillary Clinton is with the powerful and wealthy, the influential presence of Libertarian and Green Party candidates in the electoral fray and the negativity about the mainstream candidates. Simultaneously, it also reflects the conflict of opinions and themes, and the decay in the US political economy. The influence of third party candidates explains a lot. Unlike presidential elections of the past two decades, Libertarian nominee Gary Johnson and Green Party nominee Jill Stein attract a considerable section of people, particularly the young. The drift of young voters towards the third party candidates has alarmed the Democrats.

The second factor, the return of class to American politics with a mix of white, black and minority identity and nationalism has greater and deeper implications. It is made to believe that the white as a class is losing to other sections in the larger economic and political arena. The embrace of identity politics as its core value by the Democratic Party has distanced white working class from it. The white working class perceives that Obama Care was designed to benefit other groups of people. The recurring incidents of terror strikes in the US and Europe have generated a sense of insecurity, particularly among sections of whites. Donald Trump trumpets that the whites are losing their country because of liberal immigration, refugee policies and complicity with Islamic terrorism. That is why, in a Quinnipiac University survey, 80 percent of Trump's supporters polled said they felt that, "the government has gone too far in assisting minority groups," and 85 percent agreed that, "America has lost its identity".

The racial and nationalist colour of the debate on various issues has created a situation of white vs. black and multiculturalism vs. identity politics. Some Trump supporters go to the rhetorical sloganeering of 'Make America White Again'. Trump has succeeded in defining all the problems faced by America in the framework of white nationalism, identity politics and insecurity. Suffice to say, irrespective of the outcome of the election, the economics and politics of the themes and issues discussed during the campaign will have a lasting impact on US society, economy and polity. The polarising positions, slogans of narrow nationalism and racism and pessimistic narratives of future are eating into the very roots of American multicultural values and constitutional ethos with dangerous ramifications for the US in particular and the world at large.

Anti-establishment Sentiment Illumines US Presidential Election

Professor Rajeev Sreenivasan

This year's US presidential election has surprised many because fancied candidates on both the Democratic and Republican sides have struggled. The best explanation is that there is a certain sentiment of anger and frustration among citizens, and that this anger is directed towards the traditional ruling classes, including dynasties.

The biggest theme is the apparent pessimism of the US electorate. Long celebrated as the most optimistic, 'can-do', gung-ho people around, it appears that the supremely self-confident American of legend is now beset by feelings of inadequacy - he is suddenly not so sure of his country's place in the world. For someone like me, who lived for a long time in the US, this is downright shocking.

In many ways, despite some good news recently about the economy, this has led to disillusionment about the current administration of President Barack Obama. There was the damning question that Ronald Reagan asked some years ago, "Are you better off now than you were four years ago?" This question could well be asked by Donald Trump today about the eight years of rule by the Democratic Party. Obama is still personally popular, but it is not clear that this will rub off on fellow Democrats.

In particular, statistics suggest that a number of middle-class people have found their standards of living stagnating, and some are even fearful that their children will be less well-off than themselves. This is the first generation in American history that has had to face this alarming possibility, which goes against everything Americans hold dear.

They blame immigration, globalisation and perhaps most damagingly, the elites who are seen to have enriched themselves while presiding over the impoverishment of their countrymen. There is animosity towards what has been called the 'military-industrial complex' by Noam Chomsky, and sometimes 'Deep State'. This includes other forces, including the media, the church and academic elites. They are accused of letting 'us' down.

Nassim Nicholas Taleb, the celebrated author of 'Black Swan', has drawn up some instances of elite malfeasance - the medical establishment, after years of telling us that cholesterol is

evil, suddenly did a U-turn. Only 36 per cent of scientific papers are shown to be replicable, that is, even 'science' is suspect. The investment bankers and ratings agencies that brought about the 2008 financial meltdown, prompting a large bailout at taxpayer expense are also part of the hated elite. And nobody trusts the media to be non-partisan anymore.

This backlash against elites has been a factor in this year's election, as it was also in the UK's Brexit vote, where the common voter rebelled against the advice of the establishment.

Hillary Clinton, as the most 'establishment' candidate on either side, barely eked out a victory against Bernie Sanders, an elderly socialist from obscure Vermont, and a most unlikely candidate for President. Similarly, the presumed front-runners on the Republican side, such as Jeb Bush, did not get far. This is simply not the elites' year.

Even the youth vote, traditionally left of centre and Democrat-leaning, has not been enamoured of Hillary Clinton. She struggled against Bernie Sanders, and diehard 'Feel the Bern' fans may just stay at home instead of voting for her. Some voters may also choose third-party candidates, Gary Johnson of the Libertarian Party or Jill Stein of the Green Party.

In addition, Clinton has had her share of unforced errors. The email issue (the fact that sensitive emails as Secretary of State were sent from her personal server, not a trusted government server), the trust deficit (the fact that rightly or wrongly she is seen as not trustworthy, for instance in the unseemly links between the Clinton Foundation and government) and the health issue (there are persistent rumours about her poor health and her bout of pneumonia that she attempted to conceal did not help), have all combined to handicap her.

The damning Wiki Leaks revelations that showed how the Democratic National Committee may well have conspired to deny Bernie Sanders a fair chance at winning the nomination did nothing to dispel the air of intrigue and untrustworthiness some attribute to Clinton.

Hillary Clinton is therefore likely to lose the election, though she has, on paper, all the advantages and credentials. In a sense, "anybody but Hillary" has become the standard meme among some angry voters, leading them to downplay Donald Trump's negatives. Even the 'gender card' is not getting her much support. There was much support for President Obama based on the 'race card', the feeling that it was time a black man became President. However, the reasonable proposition that it is time a woman became President still does not give Hillary Clinton a big push, because of the widespread negative feelings about her.

Donald Trump, despite his colourful and extreme positions, is benefitting from this anger. He will also doubtless moderate his stance if he wins. The US government is like a battleship, huge and not easy to turn. Continuity will be maintained by the army of bureaucrats. Therefore many voters discount his occasionally outrageous stances as just election posturing. But he is tapping into the wave of dissatisfaction among the voters, and I expect him to win.

The fact is that there is little to celebrate in the last few years of a jobless recovery in the US; and it is a fact that, all said and done, domestic matters impel voters to take sides. Even on the foreign front, there is not much to cheer. The mess in the Middle East, the unravelling of Europe, a pointless wrangle with Russia in Ukraine and the threat of a resurgent China reducing the US to an also-ran in Asia are all being ascribed rightly or wrongly to Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton and John Kerry. There is a feeling that the US is past its prime, and that negative message is boomeranging on the incumbent Democrats.

Hillary Clinton's biggest plus should be that she is the 'known devil', so to speak; everything about her, including her deep experience and driving ambition, and her somewhat dubious friendships with the Wall Street, are all known. Donald Trump is then the 'unknown devil'. But Americans chose the unknown Barack Obama eight years ago, at that time preferring his message of 'hope and change' over Hillary Clinton's experience and gender (in the race for the Democratic nomination). Perhaps the same willingness to try somebody new is helping Donald Trump this year. He has momentum (the 'Big Mo') as he has been steadily narrowing the gap in both total voters and electoral college numbers leading up to the first presidential debate on September 26. It remains to be seen if he can carry it beyond that debate.

Legacy of Obama's Foreign Policy in the Middle East

Vinny Davis

As the second innings of Barack Obama draws to a close, the American foreign policy is facing a critical test of legitimacy.

The belief in US exceptionalism- American indispensability for ensuring stability of its trusted allies and its preponderance to prevent the outbreak of conflicts and sustain peace - is being questioned as the Middle East faces its worst turmoil in many decades. The increased deployment of forces has had drastic effects, and the human and monetary costs of such long drawn conflicts have tested the patience of the US population like never before. It would not be wrong to surmise that in the primaries campaign to the US presidential election 2016, both outsider candidates to the ruling regimes- Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders- capitalised on the growing antagonism towards the ruling establishment. They further reiterate how hard choices need to be taken in foreign diplomacy in the Middle East.

Miscalculations in the Middle East?

Barack Obama's 2009 Nobel Peace Prize (awarded for his stated goals than counting on his accomplishments) legacy is now characterised by the image of five-year-old Omran Daqneesh. Ironically, it is the latest sign of horror from war-torn Syria.

The US is portending its retreat from the spoils of the wars it unleashed in the region and this decision shows the implications of its disastrous schemes over the past decade. It warrants an analysis of the legacy of Obama-Biden foreign policy vis-à-vis Middle East. The winter of 2009 witnessed the first African American to occupy the White House. The promise of change ushered by Obama, however, coincided with a phase of the US economy experiencing its worst recession and the setbacks of a war weary foreign policy in Iraq and Afghanistan. Though it cannot be overruled that Obama inherited a chaotic foreign policy from George W Bush, Jr, the same reason is being brandished repeatedly to cover up the diplomatic miscalculations.

Faulty intelligence reports and intolerance towards the dictatorial regime of Saddam Hussein combined with the liberal institutional dream to restore peace and stability through democratic rule resulted in the entire Iraq fiasco. The war, which was thought to be easily

won by the top security hawks, became a haunting spectre for Obama with implications till date. The announcement of withdrawal of operations in Iraq by 2012 showed the first signs of retreat. The security vacuum that followed and the negligence towards the rise of sectarian elements led to the growth and transformation of the Islamic State (IS) into a global threat, aggravated the Syrian humanitarian crisis and made the US a mute spectator of Iranian attempts to subdue Iraq by backing the puppet government of Nouri-al-Maliki, besides adding up the toll of proxy wars in the region.

If the US foreign policy regrets succumbing to the pressures of NATO-led western coalition to intervene in Libya, it is primarily because of the costly disaster it conceived. Libya was the first experiment of the US Africa Command (AFRICOM) formed under the aegis of Pentagon in 2008 for military intervention in the African continent. With the Libya International Assistance Mission still in its nascent stages, the resultant delay in restoring order and legitimacy in the country and the reluctance of European powers to get involved further, add pressure to the US to broker a solution, lest the nation may become another breeding ground for splinter groups to take charge.

The Libyan quagmire would have been the reason for the cautiousness in Syria. The ongoing Syrian civil war has reduced Syria to a protracted chessboard, where major powers, supporting and opposing the Assad regime, have negotiated settlement as an answer to end the strife, without devising the required means to this end. Latest estimates state that the war has killed or injured 11.5 per cent of the Syrian population.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) forged with Iran in 2015 to ease nuclear-sanctions is perceived with suspicion by the hawks in foreign policy discourse and Gulf sheikdoms. As the Iranian deal would be judged by the progress in its implementation, the US will need to channelise Iranian support in the troubled region through a strategy of restraint rather than pressure. Simultaneously, securing the fears of its allies must not be at the cost of supporting proxy war in the region. Often allies court such conflicts under the belief of US support in such interventions. On expected lines, the silent backing of the US to the Yemeni crisis against the Houthi rebels, supported by Shia Iran, is turning out to be the next drawback for US actions in the region.

The latest to join the fray in the Syrian civil war is the Turkey-led Operation Euphrates Shield. Subsequent to the failed military coup in Turkey (a NATO ally), the US-Turkey relations have hit a rough patch due to the speculated involvement of the Islamic cleric Fethullah Gullen

(living in exile in the US since 1999) in instigating the coup and the measured support of the US to the Erdogan government during the coup.

In a swift turn of events, the Russo-Turkish rapprochement has rung the alarm bells. The US is fighting hard to maintain a balance in the Syrian civil war between its allies - the rebel faction (Syrian Democratic Forces [SDF] led by Kurd militias and supported by the US Special Forces) and the recent Turkish military offensive (that leads the US-backed Free Syrian Army), for whom countering Assad or ISIS is only secondary, whilst the real intention is to keep the Kurd militias off its Syrian borders. The initial US calls of support for Turkey and its attempts to convince the Kurd militias to accede to the Turkish demands are now followed by similar calls to Turkey to restrain from its actions against SDF.

Time is not far for the US to reconsider the pros and cons of such interventions and balancing actions before falling victim to miscalculated adventures to secure friendship and alliance in the region.

Beyond the Rhetoric of Asia Pivot

Vinny Davis

The 2016 Hangzhou summit will be remembered as the last G20 meeting attended by Barack Obama as the American President. His visit to the Asia Pacific is at a time when his much-coveted Asia Pivot Strategy is demanding a face-lift.

Initiated in 2012, Asia Pivot aims to secure the support of the US allies in the Asia Pacific by strengthening multilateral security cooperation, improving avenues of trade and investment and engagement with regional multilateral institutions, besides boosting ties with rising powers in the region and upholding democracy and human rights. This is largely in pursuit of monitoring the challenges posed by China and North Korea in the region. However, Obama's graceless reception in Hangzhou and the North Korean firing of ballistic missiles while G20 was underway show growing signs of defiance from the Asia Pacific.

Can we say that Asia Pivot is slowly ending up as rhetoric, even when European allies think that the US gives undue importance to Asia over Europe? Chinese aggression is threatening the Asian hinterlands and the staunchest allies of the US in East Asia are slowly realising the apathy meted out to them. The contentious South China Sea ruling by Hague Permanent Court of Arbitration was snubbed by the Chinese, who retorted by flying Cessna CE-680 civilian aircraft over Subi and Mischief reefs. The US was a mere spectator primarily because of its non-ratification of the United Nations Law of the Seas (UNCLOS), which hinders its legitimacy of actions on contested international maritime issues. This long-pending ratification that the Pentagon duly supports is mired in a deadlock. Naturally, such loopholes will be exploited by nations like China to deter US efforts to protect its political and economic interests in Asia and ensure regional stability for its allies.

Considering the economic benefits of engaging with the Asia Pacific region, the US can ill afford to antagonise China and will continue its balancing act of appeasing the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and South Asian heavyweights like India. The diplomatic efforts vis-à-vis India, linchpin to Asia Pivot policy and trusted strategic partner of the US, and ASEAN are therefore crucial for upholding influence in the region.

The Indo-US strategic and commercial dialogue has had a fillip with the signing of the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) after decade-long negotiations. The deal enables a reciprocal provision of logistics support, supplies and services between the Indian and US militaries, besides allowing access to US military bases across the world via an automatic approval process. The declaration also involves calls for joint combat efforts against global terrorism. Still, the agreement is considered to have surrendered the territorial integrity and political sovereignty of India's foreign policy at the cost of bolstering mutual defence partnership as stereotypes abound over US bases being stationed in India. This argument does not hold much credibility as the agreement has no mention of bases being stationed in the country. Furthermore, the US has signed similar deals with more than 60 countries and the deal, largely facilitatory in nature, places no obligations on signatories to follow other US military interests. The move can be interpreted as a US tactical response to the Chinese or North Korean military advances in the region. Then again, Russian responses by closer alignment with China or Pakistan may prove counter-productive for Indian diplomatic advances with the US.

Being the staunchest allies of the US, the ASEAN member nations are pitted against growing Chinese influence. Major takeaways from this alliance in recent times would be the first ever US-ASEAN summit and Obama's visit to Laos, the first by an American President. The Sunny lands Declaration in early 2016 proved to be a successful initiative of reiterating the US commitment to the South East Asian region. The joint embrace to a rules-based order in the Asia Pacific to coordinate and protect regional peace and progress helped seal cooperation in a plethora of areas -freedom of navigation, sustainable and inclusive economic development, terrorism, trafficking and climate change. The economic initiatives of linking the major trading hubs of the region reinforce the US presence in South East Asian markets.

Obama's visit to Laos is another major advance to boost links in the region. It will be an attempt to atone for the historical wrong of turning the 'Land of a Thousand Elephants' into a 'Land of Million Bombs'(during the 1964-73 Vietnam war, the US had dropped 260 million cluster bombs to cutback the North Vietnamese supply routes along the eastern border of Laos).The visit is to reiterate the significance of greater engagement with South East Asia on the sidelines of the ASEAN summit to strengthen Asia Pivot.

Yet a dampener in the Asia Pacific policy is the delay by the US Congress in approving Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).Touted as a game-changer, TPP covering 40 per cent of world

economy could have been the largest deal ever to have cemented the US position in the Asia Pacific. Regardless of its economic benefits of boosting real GDP (inflation adjusted) by \$42.7 billion and US exports and imports by \$27.2 billion and \$48.9 billion respectively, the opposition of two major presidential candidates and the resultant public opinion now poses a difficult situation. It seems unlikely that the deal would garner enough support within the US as it has been viewed as promoting big businesses at the cost of citizens.

Though strategic partnerships with India and ASEAN nations seem significant, it can also be perceived as a final effort in upholding the much-hyped Asia Pivot policy before the end of Obama's Presidency. Amidst the volatile atmosphere in the region, even the seasoned allies expect a tougher US stand towards China. It seems the US may not take up a confrontationist stand, as the G20 became a platform to gauge the Chinese support to ratify the Paris climate deal. Yet, how far can a non-binding climate commitment yield, or is it a mere show of solidarity of Sino-US partnership? The balanced approach with which Obama played down the embarrassing scenario at the Hangzhou airport signifies that the US desires engagement than containment with China.

A Post-American West Asia? Not yet

Dr Stanly Johnny

Seven and a half years ago, while addressing a crowd of 3,000 people in the general hall of the Cairo University, President Barack Obama offered a ‘new beginning’ to the Islamic world, sought to overcome ‘years of mistrust’ and threw his weight behind the Israel-Palestine peace process. Though he did not lay out any policy paradigm, hopes were high that the new President would correct the mistakes of his predecessors and open a new chapter in America’s relations with West Asia and North Africa, a region of historic significance in US foreign policy. Now, with only months left for Obama to leave the White House, it is time to look into his legacy in the region. Has he radically altered the US foreign policy? Those who believe he did, including both his critics and defenders, have several reasons to list out. Obama made peace with Iran, a country whose leaders still call America ‘the Great Satan’, his administration went beyond the traditional equations of America’s alliance in the region by being critical of Israel and ignoring Saudi Arabia’s concerns over the Iran deal, he drew down troops from Iraq as he had promised during the campaign and refused to attack the Syrian regime despite enormous pressure both from his domestic critics and regional allies. This has given rise to both bricks and roses. Some call Obama an ideological liberal committed to peace, while others say the US retreated from West Asia under his watch.

Compared to the administration of George W Bush, Obama’s approach was certainly different. Bush was a more aggressive (and less strategic) player, who did not have to deal with any major regional challenges other than the ones he helped set off. On the other side, Obama inherited a war in Iraq, a dangerous stalemate in Iran and growing threat of jihad from several countries in the region. And during the course of his presidency, he came across his greatest challenge—the Arab protests and their aftermath crises. In the larger scheme of foreign policy, the Obama administration also had to deal with a rising, ambitious China and a resurgent, revengeful Russia. So, a new policy paradigm was inevitable.

Iraq Drawdown

Take the case of Iraq. The war had turned unpopular in America during Bush’s presidency itself. It was Bush, who signed the US–Iraq Status of Forces Agreement with Baghdad that set a December 2011 deadline to withdraw “all US forces” from “all Iraqi territory”. Obama stuck

to the plan—he drew down the troops, but retained the leverage over Iraqi politics by other means—because winding down a disastrous, unpopular war in West Asia fit into his foreign policy narrative of regaining the trust of the Islamic world and giving greater attention to other challenges. The US withdrawal from Iraq came under major criticism only after the Islamic State (IS) took over Iraqi cities in early 2014. Obama’s critics say the withdrawal was too early that put Iraqi security at risk. But such arguments overlook the fact that Iraq witnessed sectarian civil war and massive bloodshed in 2006–07 at the peak of the American invasion. So the presence of US troops per se does not deter jihadist violence in the country. On the other side, there are several reasons, such as the sectarianism of the Iraqi government and the chaos in Syria that led to the rise of IS.

Dealing with Iran

Regarding Iran, Obama learnt his lessons from his predecessor’s Iraq adventure. Even Iraq was attacked after a decade of US sanctions that had weakened Saddam Hussein’s power within the country. The Americans had also cultivated strong ties with the Iraqi Kurds and dissent politicians. But Iran, compared to Saddam’s ruptured republic, was a stronger military power and a more cohesive nation. Moreover, America’s Iraq war and the rise of Shias to power in Baghdad had made Iran’s regional presence stronger. Therefore, even as administration officials said all options were on the table in tackling the Iranian nuclear crisis, the only viable option Obama had was diplomacy. So he employed a carrot-and-stick approach—imposed stringent sanctions while simultaneously offered an olive branch to the Iranian rulers. It worked as the Iranians, already strained by economic pains and fears of a public unrest, responded positively. Here the key criticism is that the deal makes Iran, which is at odds with America’s two greatest allies in the region—Israel and Saudi Arabia—stronger, and by facilitating that Obama has compromised America’s traditional interests. Though the Saudis warily welcomed the deal, Israel did not only reject it but its Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu went to the US campaigning against it.

But Obama did not fundamentally alter America’s traditional alliances in the region with the Iran deal. True, the agreement and the subsequent removal of sanctions make Iran a stronger power. But it has delayed Iran becoming a nuclear country at least by 10 years, leaving Israel the only nuclear-armed state in the region. And to mollify Israel’s concerns, the administration tactically turned a blind eye towards Israel’s atrocities against the Palestinians. There were harsh occasional criticisms by administration officials against Israel’s continuing settlement activities in the West Bank and atrocities in Gaza, but in policy, President Obama offered unprecedented diplomatic protection to Israel. Since 1967, this is

the first administration that has not let even a single resolution critical of Israel pass the UN Security Council. Even George W Bush had let six resolutions go through. Besides, Washington recently announced a \$38-billion military aid package to Israel for 10 years, the largest of its kind. Obama did the same with the Saudis. While Riyadh was upset with the US's Iran approach and angry about the Syria policy, Washington offered Saudi Arabia a \$60-billion arms deal at a time when Riyadh was bombing Yemen. Even now, when the Saudis face serious allegations such as war crimes and killing children in Yemen, Washington, which otherwise is vocal on human rights violations, keeps its tactical silence.

A Balancing Act

This offshore balancing was evident in Obama's Syria policy as well. His critics would say his reluctance to interfere in Syria has deepened the country's crisis. But that argument is historical. Obama is not a president ideologically opposed to military interventions. He used force in Libya, and is partly responsible for the chaos that country is now going through. Obama's dictum is to use force, if the risks are minimal. Moammer Qadhafi was not a challenge to the US forces. Nor did he have great regional and global powers. So attacking Libya was a relatively less risky business and therefore, like his predecessor went to Iraq, Obama went to Libya. But Syria is different. It is located at the heart of West Asia, an ally of Russia and closer partner of Iran. Any direct attack on Syria will escalate the crisis to dangerous proportions. On the other side, the picture on post-Assad Syria has never been clear as opponents of Assad still remain a divided lot and comprise deadly jihadists as well. But this does not mean that. Obama gave up on Syria or agreed to play along America's rivals in the country. He avoided only a direct confrontation. Instead, the US has been actively present in the Syrian crisis from the very beginning through its proxies. Still, the key reason the US and Russia were negotiating a ceasefire was that sections of the anti-Assad rebels were supported and controlled by the Americans, like the Assad regime is backed by the Russians.

So if one pieces together these bits into a larger picture, it would show Obama as a President, who used direct force when it was less risky, championed diplomacy when no other options were available, resorted to proxy wars when American interests were at stake and continued to defend the aggressions and human rights violations of US allies in the region. This is hardly idealism. Nor does it reflect any new beginning to the people in the region. America is not retreating from West Asia either. What Obama has done is to restore the ruthless realism of Cold War politics in America's West Asia policy, taking the reckless aggressor back to a multifaceted hegemon.

Will Indo–US Relations Continue their Uphill Path?

Raymond E Vickery, Jr

The good news is that regardless of the outcome of the US presidential election, the Indo-US relations are likely to remain on an upward path. Both major parties view India favourably and support stronger Indo-US relations. Under either Trump or Clinton, the alignment of the strategic interests of the US and India is a verity that augurs for increased cooperation. However, Trump's views on protectionism and international withdrawal and Clinton's apparent need to backtrack on trade could be problematic in the implementation of this support.

This is the most unusual US presidential election of the post-World War II era. The nominee of one of the two major parties, Donald Trump, initially gained recognition as the star of a 'reality' TV programme as well as business person. Trump has brought the techniques of reality TV to the campaign. Among these techniques is de-emphasising facts and thoughtful analysis in favour of emotion and invective to a degree rarely seen in American politics. These techniques have been highly successful in obtaining support based on personal denigration, anti-immigration, anti-Muslim, protectionism and international withdrawal.

The Trump slogan 'America First' has a history in pre-World War II isolationist politics. It was the slogan of those, who opposed the US coming to the aid of the Allies fighting Nazi Germany and imperial Japan. The slogan is aptly chosen from that perspective. Trump has cast doubt on the US treaty obligations to come to the aid of NATO members and allies Japan and South Korea. He advocates putting these obligations on a transactional basis that emphasises a perceived need for these countries to pay more to the US for their defence.

However, the question remains as to why Trump's techniques have been so successful. Root causes of the appeal of these techniques maybe attributed in large part to feelings of economic and personal in security among large portions of the middle class. Economic insecurity is in part a result of the overhang from the great recession of 2008-2010. Even though gains have been made in employment and the stock markets are booming, middle class incomes are just now returning to pre-recession levels. Further, the share of wealth owned by the top one per cent has almost doubled since 1980. Manufacturing jobs have declined through a combination of transfer to overseas facilities and the impact of

technology. Since citizens can vote against trade but not against technology, the tendency is to blame trade for the loss of manufacturing jobs.

Personal insecurity has been fanned by Trump's portrayal of an America ruled by corruption and violence. 'Law and Order' is a Trump mantra, which some see as entailing personal protection from terrorist and criminal elements. Some white Americans associate these elements with non-whites and immigrants. Trump has encouraged this association as well as promoting the concept that he will protect Christians against those of other faiths and non-believers.

Clinton is a staunch foe of the free flow of firearms throughout the country. She indicates the Supreme Court was wrong in its decision to find a personal right to firearms and against certain restrictions on gun ownership. Her opposition to the National Rifle Association and other gun advocates has hardened the opposition of those who see unregulated gun ownership as a fundamental right.

Clinton also has emphasised her extensive experience as First Lady, Senator and Secretary of State, as well as her plans to increase the prosperity of the middle class by taxing the highest income earners and spending that money plus borrowed funds on infrastructure, education, health care and a variety of government programmes to benefit the middle class. However, at a time, when much of the populace clamours for change, her combination of experience and defence of programmes begun or advocated by President Obama is not as effective as might be expected.

Also unusual is that both major candidates have some of the highest negative ratings of any presidential candidates ever to run against each other. This has brought about a sort of 'immoral equivalency' between the two candidates in the minds of many potential voters. Under these circumstances, Hillary Clinton's experience and ability to lead major progress in the areas of women's rights, personal safety, health care and economic stability seem to have little traction with these voters. Consequently, third party candidates may draw away enough voters to influence the outcome as they did in 2000, when Nader drew enough votes from Gore to give the race in Florida to Bush. Even though the Libertarian Party candidate could not recognise the crisis in Aleppo or name a single foreign leader he admired, former New Mexico Governor Johnson continues to poll about 10 per cent nationally in the presidential race. Many of these voters believe that Hillary does not represent the change they seek but do not approve of Trump.

However, it is important to recognise that under the American system of electing the President through an electoral college of states, the national popular vote totals are irrelevant. What matters are the ‘winner takes all’ outcomes in a small number of states that have large numbers of electoral votes and are relatively evenly divided politically. These so-called ‘battleground’ states of Colorado, Florida, North Carolina, Virginia, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan, New Hampshire and Wisconsin will determine who is the next President.

Unfortunately, the US campaign reflects a rising tide of protectionism that will not be good for Indo-US relations. Particularly Trump with anti-foreigner, anti-immigrant rhetoric, his threats to pull out of international trade agreements and blaming the loss of US jobs on these agreements, would make it difficult for India to obtain H1-B visas and IT services access. For the first time, the Republican Party platform calls for a reduction in *legal* immigration to the US. The anti-trade rhetoric of Trump and Sanders has pushed Clinton away from her previous advocacy of trade deals. The US move to protectionism to some extent mirrors the mood in India that has insisted on local content and ‘buy Indian’ restrictions that have been particularly onerous in the solar power and IT hardware industries.

In the final analysis, the American democracy has faced worse crises than the presidential election of 2016 and has emerged stronger than before. The old adage that ‘democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others’ is about to be proven again.

US Presidential Election– The Indian Prospects (Part 1)

Vinson Xavier Palathingal

The US is heading to the polls on November 8 to elect its 45th President. As it is universally settled by now, the options American people have this time around are very limited. Both the candidates are extremely divisive and controversial, and most voters will cast their votes ‘against’ the opponent of their choice, than ‘for’ their choice.

Let us start with the historic candidate, Hillary Rodham Clinton. She has impressively made history as the first woman to win the presidential nomination for a major US political party. As a candidate of the ‘establishment’, most Democrats and many establishment Republicans, including former Republican Presidents such as the Bushes, former candidates like Mitt Romney and business magnets like Warren Buffet and Michael Bloomberg, have lined up behind her. Her supporters believe that she is a better option mostly because she will maintain the status quo, whereas her outsider opponent and change candidate Donald Trump is not at all tested and very unpredictable, and has a ton of temperament issues. So, for whoever is okay with the status quo, and especially since the alternative Trump seems to be too risky, it is easy to conclude that Clinton is their choice. Majority Indians, whether they are in India, America or other parts of the world, seem to subscribe to the same philosophy. This article will briefly assess some of her positions, especially with the Indian national interest as well as the interests and preferences of the Indian American community, to see how she fares.

On economy front, most experts believe that Clinton’s policies will result in tax increases, reducing the incentive to work, save and invest. Obama increased taxes by \$1.7 trillion to fund his welfare initiatives that he believes will make the world a fair place. Clinton too has proposed bolder welfare agenda, to make it fairer for the poor and suffering, without clearly articulating where the money is going to come from. Clinton is expected to continue Obama policies, and in a tight money situation, it will be foolish for anyone to expect that taxes will go down under her watch. She talks highly about small businesses without any specific viable proposals to help them. If we go by the aftermath of Obama Care for small businesses, which will stay under Clinton presidency, small businesses cannot expect any dramatic improvement in their situation. Employer’s health insurance premiums skyrocketed, resulting in most small

businesses dropping their insurance coverage, making them less attractive for prospective employees. Small businesses play a vital economic role in the US. In 2012, according to US Census Bureau data, there were 5.73 million employer firms in the country. Firms with fewer than 500 workers accounted for 99.7 percent of those businesses, and businesses with less than 20 workers made up 89.6 per cent. Most Indian American businesses being such small businesses, and most Indian American workers being in high income brackets, Clinton's economic policies will have direct adverse impact on the financial wellbeing of Indian Americans.

On the ethics front, everyone knows that Clinton had different stories for different audience, when it came to Benghazi debacle. On the ongoing email server controversy too, Clinton lied about what she knew, what she deleted, what was classified, so on and so forth. Wiki Leaks coming out on a daily basis shows how Hillary used her status as the Secretary of State to raise money for her private trust, the Clinton Foundation, and how she used the party machinery to destroy her primary opponent Bernie Sanders, to name a few. It is a matter of national security, and to an extent, international security. While Benghazi shows a level of immaturity in crisis situations, her private email servers are indeed a sign of ignorance and/or negligence, and the content of her secret emails shows her lack of respect for law and how different the real Clinton's beliefs are from her public positions on issues.

Clinton's track record when it comes to India, contrary to popular belief, is not seen to be friendly, but rather corrosive. A long-time ally and major donor of former President Bill Clinton and Hillary Clinton, Robin Raphel was at the centre of an FBI counterintelligence probe in the last two years. She was a registered foreign agent for the Pakistani government up until just days before she was appointed to run the US State Department's Pakistan aid team. Raphel's emphasis on providing Pakistan with military aid and construction of oil line in Afghanistan for supply to Pakistan, her characterisation of Kashmir as a disputed territory and her lobbying for separatists in Jammu and Kashmir made her a target of criticism in India. Raphel also sided with Sikh separatists and persuaded the Clintons to support them. As part of spying investigation, FBI had searched her home and her security clearance had been revoked, though in March 2016, the investigation was closed without any charges being filed. The Clintons US of the 90s showed an irrational curiosity to equate India and Pakistan, whether in connection with the sanctions, nuclear policy, presidential visit or military aid, in spite of growing Islamic fundamentalism in Pakistan. Rose Law Firm in Arkansas headed by Hillary Clinton was the official lobbying firm for Pakistan in the US. The firm brought Bank of

Credit and Commercial International (BCCI) to the US, a corrupt bank notorious for housing many dark channels and criminal finance networks. It was started in 1972 by two Pakistani bankers. Clinton was one of the two individuals involved as legal representation for BCCI. Criminal investigations uncovered that BCCI was laundering money for Middle Eastern terrorists, including Osama Bin Laden. This bank has directly financed almost all the major terrorist plots in the 1990s, including 9/11.

Obama has done extremely well to facilitate the advancement of strategic partnership with India under Prime Ministers, Manmohan Singh and Narendra Modi. But his administration has shown weakness when it comes to Pakistan, and maybe the remnant of the Clintons Pakistan friendship circles is to be blamed. Despite having evidence of Pakistan's malicious activities, aid has continued to flow to Pakistan. In turn, Pakistan uses a big chunk of this money to buy weapons from the US, an extremely counter intuitive process. The remainder of the aid is used to take part in and sponsor illicit/violent activities everywhere, especially India.

This also leads to the question of the numerous and high-amount donations to the Clinton Foundation from the Middle East. Irrespective of Clinton's extent of involvement, her associations and actions with the Arab world shout a lack of foresight. Clinton's ignorance thereof has led to several tragedies and miscalculations, for which many Americans have paid with their lives.

With folks such as Huma Abedin and Robin Raphel as her trusted allies, and Clinton herself having the history of leading a firm that officially lobbied for Pakistan, the access to a Clinton-occupied White House will be obviously much easier for Pakistanis than for Indians. The huge progress in the Indo-American relations achieved during the last 16 years under Bush and Obama that we all have worked so hard for, may suffer some reversals under Clinton. The US is now projecting India as a counter to China and as a world player, while Pakistan is regularly admonished by US lawmakers for being the Mecca of terrorism. India does not want any reversal of the progress, and given Clinton's penchant for Pakistan, India would have to remain utmost vigilant under a Clinton Presidency.

US Presidential Election – The Indian Prospects (Part 2)

Vinson Xavier Palathingal

Now when it comes to Trump, his weaknesses are well known. His fondness for drama and theatrics is obviously making his policy messages less discernable to the public. He shows extreme immaturity, almost that of a teenager when it comes to attacking his rivals personally. In the primary season, he was debating personality traits and looks instead of policy positions. He is supposed to be over projecting his business successes, his portfolios and his net worth. He does not show empathy where it is due, and he ridicules people for their minor flaws, in spite of their larger than life achievements. He is notorious for bluntness and lack of strategic thinking. He seems to be blurting out whatever comes to his mind at the spur of the moment and changing his positions more often than people can tolerate. He seems to have much trouble when it comes to his treatment of women, calling them names based on their looks. He is being accused of indulging in habitual sexual misconduct. Clearly, he has neither the temperament nor the sophistication to become the most powerful man on planet earth. Then, why is he still holding up as a viable candidate?

First, he is running to ‘Make America Great Again’ with a ‘Country First’ rallying cry. For folks who think America is already great, his message is not resonating well at all, those include most minorities, immigrants and women. When these sections of the society benefitted greatly in the last 50 years, the one important section that suffered economically was the working class white men. Apparently, some of his policy positions, when compared to those of Hillary Clinton, are resonating well with the huge majority of working class white males. Them coming out and voting for him in huge numbers, as America has never seen before, is the only road for Trump to the White House.

On the economy front, Trump being a businessperson obviously understands the problems of running a business, especially small businesses. He has proposed to reduce taxes and relieve taxpayers by excluding childcare expenses from taxation. He intends to abolish estate taxes, lower business income tax to 15 per cent and remove limitations and taxation of foreign investments in America. American economy has only grown 1.2 per cent over the last year, the weakest recovery since the Great Depression, predictable consequence of massive taxation, regulation, bad trade deals and massive bureaucratic mess, according to Trump and his policy experts. This is definitely a reason why wealthy and self-employed Indian Americans

should have a second look at Trump, as they are going to benefit tremendously under his economic agenda.

He exhibits enormous strength when it comes to strong defence and controlling illegal immigration, a very popular message in the majority white community. Especially with the weekly terrorist attacks, his support base is going to be more energised with each terror plot unfolding. He wants to put a stop to the refugee intake from the war-torn Arab countries. Trump along with a huge majority of US citizens believe that there is not enough data on these potential refugees to vet them properly. To reinforce their fears, the Department of Homeland Security reported that at least 858 illegal immigrants on the deportation list and some with potential terrorist ties that had been ordered deported or removed under another name, were improperly granted US citizenship, due to a failure to maintain adequate fingerprint records. Trump is definitely the 'law and order' candidate. In the continuing violence against police in major US cities, he is obviously on the side of the police unlike Clinton, who sides with the agitating sections of the society. Indian Americans, who are extremely concerned about the safety and security of their families, may find an ally in Trump, if they can ignore his immaturity, mannerisms and lack of presidential demeanour. Is it okay to ignore those qualities is the million-dollar question?

Trump intends to renegotiate trade deals, especially North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), a very unpopular trade deal with Canada and Mexico. He proposes to withdraw from Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) that he contends will destroy the US car industry. According to the Peterson Institute, TPP would increase the US automobile trading deficit by \$23 billion by 2025. He also intends to apply tariffs and duties to countries that take advantage. He has proposed massive investments to improve US domestic infrastructure, including roads, bridges and airports, a direct indication of 'improving America'. These proposals if implemented are definitely in the best interest of Indian Americans too.

On the Indo-American front, like in many other areas, Trump is not tested. However, he intends to seek Indian assistance to deal with Pakistan. He is the number one enemy of Islamic fundamentalism emanating from Pakistan, which India has been dealing with for decades. So far, he has had only praises for India and its leaders. All the data indicates that he could continue the Bush-Obama agenda of strengthening India as a US partner in Asia.

Considering all the facts and in conclusion, India and Indian Americans should remain open for the weeks to come and see how the policies of Trump and Clinton unfold on the debating stages, before making a final call.

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