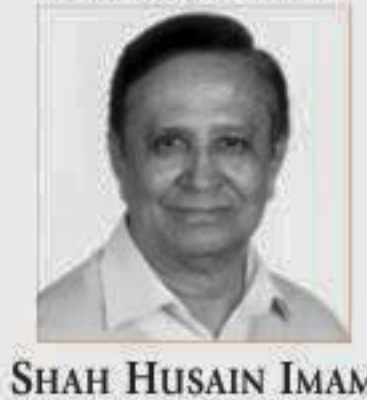


# Is there a method in his madness?

PLEASURE IS ALL MINE



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

**D**ONALD Trump may not win the US presidency but he has assured his place in history as an absurd choice for the GOP which literally means

the God's Own Party.

Surely it will take a miracle to bolster his sagging fortunes but one thing appears to be a self-fulfilling prophesy even at this proximate stage: He has tectonically jogged the dormant, somewhat incoherent, platform for change. Democrat leader Bernie Sanders, once a challenger in the Primaries against Hillary up until the Convention, eventually extended support to her on an understanding for change. Nevertheless, Donald by his utterly unconventional, non aesthetic verbiage and antics, may have voted himself out of reckoning, handing the role of the force for good to Hillary Clinton.

Trump's playful capacity for damaging his own image, his self-destructive behaviour pattern, his crude outbursts as if punching like a wounded stag and his cozying up gesticulations or theatrics indicating he was enjoying himself more than perhaps the shows. Quite frankly, the Republican candidate could not replicate his outreach over the social media through connecting with the audiences of live debates.

His brief, self-hyped evolution from a boastful persona bordering on

a bumptious braggart through falling for a touch of glory by adopting George Washington's famous phrase 'making America great' - again to his being an underdog presents a persona of self-contradictions. But underlying it all is a vengeful deliberateness about everything he says or does. Thus, he comes through as someone capable of mischievous interpretations of developments not going his way.

Now he is propagating a victimhood image. You may call it grapes are sour mode; and so as not to let down his die-hard supporters, he is preparing them for a doomsday scenario. A latest Time magazine cover story titled "Total Meltdown" shows his fragile unkempt hair sliding about. Its story line reads: "How trump plans to win even if he loses the election." His rants against rigged elections right from a 'defective' electoral roll through allegedly opaque nomination process to suspect stitched-up election result reverberate every now and then.

Time magazine says that at West Palm Beach, Florida, Trump proclaimed a "unified field theory of the situation, producing a vast plot against him overseen by a group of faceless global elites, named media organisations, bankers, elements of federal government and even his own party leadership."

So he is all set not to accept the election result if it goes against him, even though his falling numbers are acknowledged by his own camp. In the most unlikely event it comes to that, this would be a serious



Donald Trump hugging a US flag in New Hampshire in August. Experts say his rhetorics attract a base that is largely white, of a lower socio-economic status and less educated than the average American.

PHOTO: REUTERS

departure from the unbroken tradition of peaceful transfer of power in the US democracy.

My hunch is that Trump, or for that matter, the Republican party is projecting a certain martyr complex about themselves to ride on sympathy

votes for a good tally of 100 senatorial and 400 House of Representative seats up for grabs, simultaneously with the presidential election.

The stakes are crucial for the Democrats when you ruminate over

the Obama-initiated legislations that were routinely scuttled. Even bipartisanship, a hallmark of US political system, got bogged down unceremoniously.

Hillary Clinton, for obvious reasons, is directing her energy towards garnering support for Democrat nominees for senators and members of the House of Representatives. The division in the Republican party centred on Trump may work to the advantage of Hillary - that is how Democrats assess their prospects to turn the table in both Houses on their adversaries. But the opposite may hold true: Make up for a presidential election debacle by holding up in the Houses.

Obama for his part is powering Hillary's campaign to muster strong in the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Usually you don't philosophise on a candidate for US presidential election who in the eye of the world has lowered the bar of expectation. Yet, some quotes may spice up the analysis - I hope. Trump may like to know how sages have shown reverence to the word - absurd. Just for a consolation, may be!

Albert Camus said, "Happiness and the absurd are two sons of the same earth. They are inseparable."

Here is what Samuel Beckett had to say succinctly: "I can't go on, I will go on."

To end with Albert Einstein: "If at first the idea is not absurd, then there is no hope for it."

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*Donald [Trump] by his utterly unconventional, non aesthetic verbiage and antics, may have voted himself out of reckoning, handing the role of the force for good to Hillary Clinton.*

# A Tale of Two Cities

GWYNNE DYER

**T**WO great sieges are underway in the Middle East, one in Mosul in Iraq and the other in Aleppo in Syria. They have a great deal in common, including the fact that the attackers both depend heavily on foreign air power, but are treated by most international media as though they were completely different events. How similar they are will become clearer with the passage of time.

Sieges of cities, once a major part of warfare, grew rare in the course of the 20th Century, mainly because of the rise of air power. You didn't need to besiege cities anymore, because you could just smash them to smithereens from the air: Guernica, Dresden, Hiroshima. But that's not so easy in the era of instant global media coverage.

Seventy years without a really major war have allowed us to develop a major dislike for killing civilians from the air. Nobody on either side would have been the least bit reluctant to blast Aleppo or Mosul into oblivion in 1945 if it served their strategic purposes, but moral tastes have changed.

They haven't changed that much, of course, or we would be seeing a horrified rejection of the entire concept of nuclear deterrence, which is based on the threat to extinguish millions or tens of millions of innocent civilian lives if the other side behaves too badly. But when the destruction from the air is piecemeal, with relatively small numbers of identifiable victims, we can get quite upset about it.

Every civilian death from bombing in Iraq and Syria - but not the thousands of other civilian casualties each month - is therefore publicly catalogued and condemned.

The Russians are taking enormous criticism over their bombing of the rebel-held eastern part of Aleppo (although the indiscriminate "barrel bombs" are the work of the Syrian air force, not the Russians).

The US air force has been much more careful about its bombing around Mosul so far, but it too will

control the besieged areas are jihadi extremists: Islamic State in Mosul, and the Nusra Front in eastern Aleppo. (In Aleppo, the jihadis number perhaps a thousand out of ten thousand fighters, but they dominate both the fighting and the decision-making.)

In both cases, too, the troops on

militias recruited from Lebanon, Iraq and Afghanistan and paid for by Iran. Actual Syrian army troops have been decimated and exhausted by five years of war, and those who remain are being carefully husbanded. So they wait for the Russians to bomb the defenders to pieces, and just use the troops to mop up afterwards.

government's troops.

The Iraqi government has therefore promised that Shia militias will not enter the city, nor will the Kurdish troops that are assisting in the early part of the offensive. What this means, however, is that very few soldiers will actually be fighting once the attack reaches the edge of the city proper.

There will be perhaps 25,000 regular Iraqi army troops in the final assault, of whom maybe half can be relied on to fight. There will be around 5,000 American troops in the area, but they are not allowed to engage in direct combat. And there are about 1,500 Turkish army troops who have been training a Sunni militia north of Mosul (but the government in Baghdad has ordered them to leave).

Islamic State's five or six thousand fighters have had years to prepare their defences, and street fighting uses up attacking troops very fast. Even "precision" airstrikes in urban areas always mean lots of dead civilians, but central Mosul will not fall unless the United States uses its air force to dig the defenders out.

Even the current advance across relatively open country south and east of Mosul relies on the massive use of air power to keep the attackers' casualties down. When the troops reach the city limits, the whole operation will stall unless the US government starts serious bombing in the built-up area.

If it does that, then the civilian casualties will be quite similar to those inflicted by the Russian air force in eastern Aleppo. But the Western media will doubtless still find ways to see a huge difference between the two.

The writer is an independent journalist whose articles have been published in 45 countries.



Airstrikes affecting civilians in Aleppo, Syria.

PHOTO: AFP

end up having to choose between bombing the city heavily and seeing the Iraqi government's attack fail.

Both Mosul and eastern Aleppo are Sunni Muslim cities facing an attempted reconquest by Shia-dominated national governments. In both cases the rebel fighters who

the government side are divided by ethnic and sectarian differences, and largely unreliable. Which is why, in the end, government victory in both countries depends on foreign air power.

In Aleppo, the troops leading the attack on the ground are mostly Shia

In the case of Mosul, the attacking forces are even more varied. The Iraqi government's regular troops are mostly Shia, and the pro-government militias are entirely Shia and notorious for treating Sunnis badly. Since almost everybody left in Mosul is Sunni, they are terrified of the

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## QUOTABLE Quote



WAYNE GRETZKY

Former Canadian ice hockey player  
*You miss 100% of the shots you don't take.*

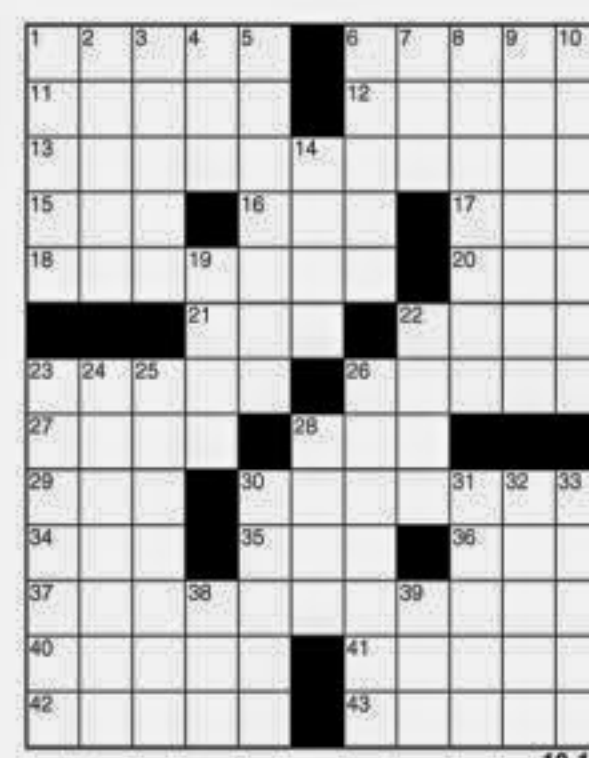
## CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Make suitable
- 6 "Se - espanol"
- 11 Ring combatant
- 12 Music's -- Brothers
- 13 Keep under control
- 15 Start of a count
- 16 Afg. neighbor
- 17 Cochlea setting
- 18 Election night news
- 20 Debate side
- 21 Antique auto
- 22 Quite
- 23 Phony persona
- 26 Handed over
- 27 Research settings
- 28 Junior, to senior
- 29 Second person
- 30 Stove parts
- 34 Polite address
- 35 Flamenco cheer
- 36 Bigwig, briefly
- 37 Not give in to despair
- 40 "Cats" poet
- 41 Game piece
- 42 Has a banquet

DOWN

- 1 Despise
- 2 "Loma --"
- 3 Wheel connectors
- 4 Walker, on a sign
- 5 One with instant siblings
- 6 Yokels
- 7 Cabinet wood
- 8 Censored
- 9 "Smiley's People" author
- 10 Dan of "Ghost-busters"
- 14 Brusselsbased org.
- 19 Coffee dispensers
- 22 -- diagram (logic tool)
- 23 -- out (completed)
- 24 Stuffed pasta
- 25 Ohio college
- 26 First name in civil rights
- 28 Enterprise crewman
- 30 Winter footwear
- 31 Conjure up
- 32 Tum red, maybe
- 33 Wasn't thrifty
- 38 Buck's mate
- 39 Greedy one



YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

A	C	M	E	S	C	H	I	C
T	R	U	M	P	R	A	D	A
T	U	L	S	A	O	H	A	R
I	S	T	R	E	O	H	O	P
C	H	I	C	K	E	N	S	O
O	L	E	C	A	S	E		
T	A	M	M	y	C	A	N	E
A	C	A	I	P	A	R		
C	H	I	C	K	E	N	S	O
K	I	N	E	A	T	P	S	I
L	E	M	O	N	A	H	E	A
E	V	E	N	T	I	N	G	E
E	N	O	S	A	S	S	E	S

## BEETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker



## BABY BLUES

by Kirkman & Scott

